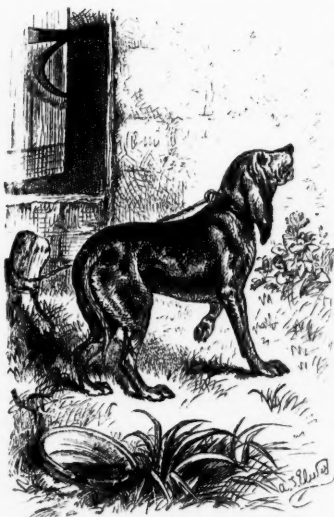


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*AN HISTORIC BLOODHOUND.<sup>1</sup>*



THE animal world has of late years had so much kindness bestowed upon it, and the virtues and good deeds of all sorts of creatures have been so much lauded, that it is a bold thing for anyone to say anything implying wickedness in any animals, especially dogs. In giving, indeed, an account of the evil deeds of certain dogs, we do not impute to them much individual responsibility for their wickedness. We know that carnivorous animals cannot be blamed for what we should call cruelty; and dogs, if cruel, must have been trained by men who have either ne-

glected to repress their ferocious instincts, or who for some purpose, which can hardly be a good one, have encouraged or even stimulated them. The blame, therefore, we cast upon these dogs

<sup>1</sup> The incidents on which this narrative is founded are taken from authentic sixteenth-century records.

is only a feeble reflection, be it remembered, of that we bestow upon their masters.

Our purpose is to speak of the deeds of dogs in the West Indies and the Spanish main in the early days after the discovery of those regions, and especially to relate the premature end of one of the most noted of them, which was attended with all the pomp and circumstance of a tragedy of the heroic order.

Historians do not tell us in what year the Spaniards first took bloodhounds with them to the West Indies to aid in fighting the unclothed natives; but there is circumstantial evidence to show that some of these ferocious brutes must have been part of the equipment of Columbus in his second expedition, if not in the first. Very early in the naïve records of the early chroniclers we read of certain unfortunate Indians, *caciques* and others, being punished by being *aperreado*—given to the dogs. Modern writers for the most part have overlooked this formidable kind of warfare which was practised by the Spaniards. No one can deny the undaunted courage which prompted those men to attack coolly and confidently overwhelming masses of natives; but we should always remember the immense superiority they had over them in every way. Especially was this so in the case of the first islanders with whom they came in contact. The inhabitants of Hayti had not even their muscles developed by labour. They ‘tickled the earth’ with a stick instead of a hoe, and it ‘laughed’ yams, maize, and many other kinds of tropical produce. They had no wild animals that gave the trouble of being hunted. The *hutias* were taken out of holes in trees and crevices in rocks, and the *agoutas*, the ‘dumb dogs’ of the *conquistadores*, were so sluggish that they were easily run down. The Spaniards used to despatch them with a kick of their iron-shod boots. The only food-producing employment that gave the natives any trouble, exercised their wits, and brought them face to face with danger was fishing. It is true that they experienced from time to time the horrors of war, when the Caribs made a raid on them; but there is little doubt that the misdeeds of these latter were exaggerated by the Spaniards to excuse their own red-handed dealings with them and with other tribes.

These poor Indians of the Antilles, literally naked people, armed with clubs and wooden swords, had now to face not only iron-headed spears and lances, swords of Bilbao steel (*bilboes*, as our seventeenth-century writers call them), shafts from cross-

bows, and occasional stones from culverins and bullets from clumsy muskets, which perhaps caused more terror than real damage, but horses—animals which must have seemed as formidable to them as elephants would be to us—and other strong and savage beasts trained, horrible to relate, to disembowel them.

Once, when the Spanish dominion was firmly established over the island of Hayti, then called Hispaniola, two Spaniards were



sent by Bartolomé Columbus to see to the loading of a ship with cassavi bread or biscuit, which the natives of that district had to supply their masters with by way of tribute. The bread was ready, and the two men were watching a gang of natives who were carrying the bread to the boats. One of the Spaniards had brought his dog with him, held by a stout cord tied to his collar. Following the regulations laid down by their taskmasters, who employed the *caciques* as foremen of the wretched Indians, the

*cacique* of the district, dressed like his subjects in a loin cloth, but with a diadem of highly-coloured feathers, on his head and a wand of office, also decked with feathers, in his hand, was busy-ing himself in ordering and encouraging the *peons*; now shouting at a laggard, now animating a weary man, now administering a little mild correction with his wand; and all this hoping doubtless that the representatives of the Crown of Castile there present might report favourably of his zeal and energy.

But the devil, who we have good authority for believing is ever prompting idle hands to some mischief, put it into the head of one of the Spaniards, not the owner of the bloodhound, that it would be rare fun to see the dog bring down that brightly-coloured crest to the ground, actuated doubtless by the same motive that prompts a mischievous schoolboy to shy a stone at the red-crested cock who is lording it over the more soberly clad denizens of the poultry yard. As ill-luck would have it the same idea had already occurred to the dog, who, believing that he had a right to attack every redskin that he could get at, had become furious at the flourishing of the stick and the bobbing up and down of the coloured plumes. So the man said to his companion, pointing to the *cacique*—

‘Shall I say *Fetch him* to Almanzor?’

‘*Virgen santisima!*’ cried the other, ‘dost thou not see that ’tis as much as I can do to hold him?’

‘So much the better fun. I should like to see this cock-o’-the-walk jump when he sees the dog on him. *Fetch him*, old fellow!’

The dog, who seemed to have divined what the Spaniards were talking about, was by this time almost ungovernable, and on hearing the word of command he bounded forward with all his might, dragging his master after him. The latter, either prompted by the same devil that had incited his companion or really unable to hold in the hound, let go the leash, and in a moment the wretched *cacique* was writhing on the ground, his entrails torn out by the ferocious brute.

The Indians, panic-stricken, ran away; no more bread was loaded that day; and the next, when the captain went on shore for the rest of the cargo, the village was found to be deserted: the natives had fled to the hills.

The consequence of this cruel folly was that the trodden worm turned. The neighbouring *caciques* rose in arms; twelve Spaniards were surprised and killed; and the first energetic and only for-



midable struggle of the inhabitants against the Spaniards took place, which, though quite ineffectual, was not repressed until thousands of the wretched natives had perished, butchered and burnt, and hunted to the death like vermin.

The same kind of deeds went on by the instrumentality of dogs in the other fair islands of that sea, which has witnessed so many horrors. In that of San Juan, now called Puertorico, there flourished a very fiendish dog whose name was Becerrillo—*little calf*. So renowned a man-eater was he that he was promoted to a military grade, received the pay of a sergeant



of horse and a proportionate share of prize money and spoils. He was much dreaded by the natives, although, being more exposed to the raids of the Caribs than the inhabitants of the other islands, they were less contemptible warriors. The annalist says that 'ten men with Becerrillo were equal to a hundred without him.' He lived a long life, fighting and destroying; but at last, when age had blunted his teeth and relaxed his muscles, he died on the battle-field like a grim old warrior that he was.

Let us give the devil his due. Becerrillo once showed that his bad education had not utterly exterminated the good within him. One day the Governor, Don Juan Ponce de Leon, had a

letter to send to some Spaniards who lived at a distance from the port of San Juan. So he handed it to an old Indian woman, with orders to take it at once to its destination. On her way her evil star led her to the church, where, it being a feast day, the young *hidalgos*, waiting for service to begin, were standing before the doors, clad in their best, doubtless regretting that there were so few *niñas* in the island, before whom they might display their gallant plumes and brand-new sword-belts. Becerrillo and his master, or rather his comrade in arms, was there; so one young spark suggested setting Becerrillo to worry the old woman, by way of whiling away the time before mass should begin.

No sooner said than done. The poor woman saw the huge creature making for her open-mouthed, and did the best she could, defending herself by her utter helplessness. She squatted on the ground, held out the letter in front of her, and, trembling, made her little speech.

‘My lord dog, thy servant is sent with this letter to the Christian lords down yonder. See, here it is. Do me no harm, dog my lord!’<sup>1</sup>

Becerrillo graciously admitted this claim to his forbearance. He went up to her, sniffed at her, and, though treating her with some indignity, left her to go on her way rejoicing.

Cortes, *facile princeps* in good and evil among the Spanish captains, did not fail to take with him man-eating dogs from Cuba when he went on his expedition to New Spain. But there, the Mexican warriors being clothed in jackets of quilted cotton, the bloodhounds were taught to attack the throat instead of the abdomen. Although these people had several kinds of savage animals in the country, and had offensive weapons of a more formidable kind than the natives of the Antilles could make, the Spanish bloodhounds were feared almost as much as the horses, and were well-nigh as effectual in breaking the ranks of the warriors.

When Cortes and his army were resting from their labours after the siege and destruction of Mexico, having heard many accounts of a certain king of a neighbouring country called Michoacan, to the west of Mexico, which king was an hereditary

<sup>1</sup> The annalist calls attention to the curious custom of the natives of the Antilles of repeating epithets in inverted order at the end of a phrase. Would they had condescended to preserve more of the peculiarities of the speech of that ill-fated race!

enemy of Montezuma, the great captain resolved to send an exploring expedition there, to ascertain if the accounts he had heard of the greatness of the monarch and the richness of his country were true. To this end he made choice of a soldier of fortune named Montaña, a man of some education, for he wrote an account of his journey; and to him he gave as colleagues one Peñalosa and two others, all 'men of discretion and valour.' Peñalosa owed this distinction to his being the owner of a very celebrated dog, who had not his equal in New Spain. 'So big and courageous was he,' says the annalist, 'and so dextrous in war, and so much dreaded by the Indians, that when let loose, although there might be a thousand Indians in front of him, they dared not stand up before him.' His tactics were simple but effectual. He rushed at the nearest Indian, knocking him down by his weight and the impetus of his attack, turning with amazing swiftness to another and another, till he had left a dozen or twenty men on the ground, whom the Spaniards would then despatch with their spears. By this time the front rank of the enemy had generally retired to a distance; so the dog would turn round to see if those whom he had thrown down were motionless. Those who lay quiet, either paralysed with dread or already despatched by his two-legged comrades, he took no notice of; but the faintest sign of life was a signal for him to rush upon them and tear their throats to pieces with his powerful jaws. These men being disposed of, he would go in search of fresh victims until tired out, or until there were no more to tear.

To these Castilians were associated twenty Mexican nobles, now thoroughly subjugated and anxious to gain the goodwill of their new masters; an interpreter, who, besides some knowledge of Spanish, was acquainted with Tarasca and Otomi, the two languages spoken in Michoacan, besides his native Mexican or Azteca; and as guides two men of the class of itinerant traders. These men, who were something between merchants and pedlars, formed a caste by themselves, having their little villages, serving them as goods depôts and resting-places, all over the more civilised part of tropical and semi-tropical North America, from Panamá to the farthest of the settled tribes in the North of Mexico. In war and in peace they were always recognised as neutrals; and apart from their villages they could always find in bad weather or in inclement regions some cave or hut where to shelter themselves, although in good weather they were accustomed to pass the night

out of doors. Cortes also gave the party a quantity of Spanish cutlery and trinkets, such as beads and brass ornaments, and told off some Indians to carry the wares, and also a quantity of such provisions as would not spoil, so that they need not be absolutely dependent on the chances of the journey.

All being ready, the party set out one fine morning in the month of October, the Spaniards delighting in the thought of seeing new lands and new people, the Mexican nobles glad to get away from the scenes of desolation so apparent in their own country, and the guides proud of the honour of conducting so distinguished a party. Only the poor porters, with their burden suspended by a strap from their foreheads, marched in advance in single file, uncomplaining but stolid, and apparently indifferent what masters they were serving.

The early autumn on the high Mexican plateau, about 7,000 feet above the sea-level, is the most delightful season of the year. The summer is exceeding damp and rainy; the winter and spring, though bright and sunny, are so drouthy that, what with the nightly frosts and the dry winds, the grass shrivels up and the trees look parched and withered. It is true that in the neighbourhood of the Spanish camp, though the grass was green and tall, and abundance of wild dahlias and the yellow flowers of an allied species adorned the sides of the narrow track that served them as a road, and the fields, uncultivated or left fallow from former years, were ablaze with the bright pink flowers of the *maravilla*,<sup>1</sup> that lightened up the landscape, the *adobe* huts were mostly deserted and in ruins, the trees cut down, and the few people who were met with ran to hide themselves as the *cortège* filed past. But as they went on, and began gradually to ascend the mountains which enclosed the valley of Mexico, the maize fields came into view, the yellowing leaves and the tarnished brilliancy of the tassel showing that the grain was beginning to ripen, and the way began to be strewn with yellow crab-apples which had fallen from the trees, that for two months longer would still remain adorned with abundance of bright-coloured but sour-tasted fruit. Myriads of small grain-eating

<sup>1</sup> The *maravilla* (*Cosmos bipinnatus parviflorus*), with its fennel-like leaves and its bright flowers gracefully posed on their slender stalks, is very lovely, and is as abundant in the high Mexican valleys as poppies in England. Last year it bloomed in the gardens of the Royal Horticultural Society, and it is hoped that it may become a permanent addition to our autumn flora.

birds, blue-black like crows, misnamed *tordos*, flew twittering along the fields; the bronze-winged pigeon started whirring from the bushes; the saucy *urraca* haunted the pools and the banks of the watercourses; the mocking bird sang from the taller trees; bright wren-like creatures, all blue, all crimson, or all gold, darted like living gems across their path; the *colibris* were



busy among the yellow cups of the large-flowered acacias; while a grey hare would occasionally leap from her form, or a sandy hare-like rabbit would scamper among the grass.

By degrees, as they mounted higher, firs began to be seen among the evergreen oaks, the bright green *thuja*, and a more sombre-leaved cedar-like pine. Lupins, hawk's-bill geranium, various kinds of *oxalis* and mallow, and other flowers of colder regions now represented the humbler flora; squirrels began to

bound among the trees ; an occasional fox scudded before them ; and as Lobo, the dog, began to grow restless and to whimper, the interpreter discoursed in broken Spanish of the extraordinary cunning and trickiness of the pricked-eared *coyote*, who even then, unseen by the Spaniards, was following them and spying their movements. Some deer were descried in the distance, and the Spaniards eagerly discharged their cross-bows, but without effect.

At the close of the day they had just begun to descend the western slopes of the mountains, and as the sun was now low the cold was disagreeably severe, especially following the copious perspiration caused by the toilsome ascent ; so that the Spaniards were not a little delighted when the guides pointed out a cluster of huts in the mountains, where their party could find sleeping room, and where a copious meal was soon prepared for them, while the resinous pitch-pine afforded abundant light and heat.

Thus passed three days with no event of importance to relate ; but at the close of the fourth day, after some rough climbing and the descent of another mountain range, they reached the frontier and came in sight of the Michoacanese border town of Tajimaroa, situated in a warm and fertile valley. The town still survives, but being no longer on the highway from Mexico to the great towns of Michoacan, it has lost what importance it once enjoyed.

Although the New World possessed at that time neither beasts of burden nor wheeled vehicles, the rulers of both North and South America had what may be called a postal service and information department of their own. The annalists continually remind us that the kings of those countries had speedy and accurate information of what was going on within their territories and even beyond their borders. Thus it was that almost before Montaña and his party came in sight of Tajimaroa they were met by a great procession, consisting of all the principal personages of the town in gala costume, headed by the local *cacique* and accompanied by a great crowd of the common folk.

The *cacique*, coming up to Montaña, embraced him, and his lords did the same to the other three Spaniards and the Mexican nobles. Some young men, sons of the principal inhabitants, carrying bunches of roses and nosegays of other flowers, offered one of each of the bouquets to Montaña and his party, and the *cacique*, taking Montaña by the hand, and the rest of the travelers being duly paired off in the same fashion, they went towards the town in procession. The town was enclosed by a very formid-

able wall made of huge blocks of oak timber, mostly brown with age, closely joined at the seams and well smoothed. This wall was nearly twelve feet high and six feet wide, with a parapet, and towers at intervals—a most marvellous work, taking into consideration that the Michoacanese, like the Mexicans, were unacquainted with the use of iron. The Spaniards were informed that some of the priests had charge of the repair of the wall, taking out a block as soon as it gave signs of decay and replacing it by another. The old wood was considered as something sacred, and was used as fuel in the ceremonies of the temple.

As soon as they arrived at the principal square they were met by two bodies of musicians and dancers, one composed of young men and the other of girls, who danced before them, enlivening the dance with strange songs in a high falsetto voice, and accompanied by still stranger music of flutes, horns, and drums. They were taken to the principal temple, in the courtyard of which they piled the goods they had brought with them, while they were lodged in rooms opening on it, which were clean and comfortable, with little low stools serving as chairs and tables, and a continuous bench running round the walls, where mats were laid four deep, with cotton cloths thereon, to serve as beds. The *cacique* ushered them to their apartments and left them, telling them through the interpreter to make themselves comfortable; and before long a plentiful meal of flesh, fish, various dishes of maize, and fruits of the tropics was set before them, washed down by several kinds of wine or beer from maize and the *maguey*, or aloe, which the Spaniards called *chicha*, the name which they had brought from the Antilles for similar drinks. The word *pulque*, by which the beverage from the *maguey* is now known, is said to be a Peruvian word.

Montaño and his party were disposed to be very happy; but the Mexican lords threw a damper over their jollity by telling dreadful things of the treachery and cruelty of the Michoacanese, hinting that it might well be that this good reception was only intended to lull their suspicions, so that they might all be massacred more readily, or that the meal which had caused them to look upon things more pleasantly might be the commencement of a fattening process whereby they would be rendered more acceptable as sacrifices to the gods.

So Montaño, knowing that although they, in their capacity of messengers or ambassadors, were sacred, and that any infringe-



ment of that rule was considered an abominable crime, such sacrilegious deeds were not unseldom committed by unscrupulous monarchs (in fact, traditional Mexican history is full of these outrages on public morality), and believing that jealousy and hate of the new-comers might prevail over the pleasure which the King of Michoacan would naturally feel on account of the fall of his great rival and hereditary enemy Montezuma, thought it necessary to take all proper precautions. So they looked well to their cross-bows and other weapons, Peñalosa tied the leash of his dog to his wrist, and they kept watch and watch all night, as if they were in a hostile country.

But all passed over quietly; the *cacique* paid them a visit at dawn, bringing them an ample supply of provisions, with porters to carry them, telling that he had orders from the great lord to treat them with all respect and kindness, and to send an escort with them to their next sleeping-place. So Montaña sent back his Mexican porters, with a letter to Cortes informing him of their well-being, and they went on their way to the capital of Michoacan—not, however, before native artists had taken coloured sketches of the Spaniards, showing them walking, eating, and lying down, with grotesque but graphic details of their clothes and arms, and last, but not least, the fierce beast which accompanied them, an exaggerated account of whose prowess was in everybody's mouth. These paintings were forwarded by a special messenger to King Sinziecha, so that he might not be taken by surprise on the arrival of such strange people.

Their further progress was for some days something like a triumphal procession; for a numerous escort from one town always accompanied them until they reached the next, where they were taken in charge by the new authorities. The people of the villages near which they passed also came out to meet them, bringing them presents of food and *chicha* or *pulque*, and whenever they halted, crowded round them to examine the clothes, arms, the strange whiteness of their skins, and their great beards, and propitiating the fierce beast they brought with them by such ample offerings of food that Peñalosa began to fear that he would become too fat and good-tempered to aid them effectually in case of danger.

Gradually, however, all idea of danger faded from their minds, in spite of the nightly repeated cautions of the Mexicans, and it was with feelings of unalloyed pleasure that they saw the mag-

nificent lake of Pátzcuaro spread out before them, and discovered the white walls and towers of Tzintzontzan, the capital, embowered in trees, on the afternoon of the sixth day after leaving Tajimaroa.

When about a mile from the city they were met by so numerous a host of people that, as the annalist says, 'they covered the plain.' Foremost came King Sinziecha, the great *Caltzontzin*, in person, accompanied by 800 of the *élite* of the nation, and attended by 10,000 warriors. When they approached the Spaniards one of the grandees came forward and embraced Montaña and his companions in the name of the monarch, made them the offering of roses and other flowers and a speech of cordial welcome, which we need not translate, as we cannot vouch for its accuracy.

Thus, escorted in the most honourable manner, with music playing and standards adorned with gold and coloured feathers shining in the rays of the level sun, they entered the great square, and were lodged in a spacious apartment of the King's palace. There they were installed; water was brought, so that they might get rid of the dust of the road, and shortly afterwards the King himself came to see that they were well lodged, and many ceremonies of politeness ensued. Montaña thought it his duty to go to kiss the hands of so kind a king; but the latter drew back in consternation, and two of the lords instantly sprang forward in order to prevent such a desecration of the royal person. However, he did not seem offended, but spoke a friendly welcome to one of his lords, who repeated it to the highest in rank of the Mexicans, after which it was interpreted to the Spaniards; for without such ceremonies the King could not put himself in communication with an inferior.

Two hours afterwards, when the Spaniards had supped, his Majesty made his appearance once more, escorted with his nobles, who bore torches of pitch pine. This time he had not the smiling aspect that he had before, and as soon as he entered some armed men went before him, so as to keep a considerable space between himself and the party. He said something in grave and severe tones, which in the same roundabout way came to the Spaniards in this wise:—

'Who are ye? Whence come ye? What seek ye? Why come ye from your distant country? Peradventure ye have no meat or drink there in the land where ye were born? What had the Mexicans done to you that, having entered their city, ye

should destroy it? Do ye imagine ye will do the same to me? Take heed, for ye will find it quite another matter to treat me as ye have treated the Mexicans, whom I cannot but pity although they have always been bitter enemies of mine.'

This sudden change of manner of their royal host caused the Spaniards to feel like men caught in a trap, and they called to mind the warning of the Mexicans during the journey. But Montaña, putting a good face on the matter, made a speech in reply, in which he eulogised the great goodness and nobleness of soul of Cortes, and the might of the Emperor, and said that the latter had sent his captains with the most friendly intentions to bestow all manner of kindness on the people of that hitherto unknown world, and especially to save their souls from everlasting perdition, which they were in danger of if they did not forsake their false gods. He concluded by referring him to the twenty Mexican nobles, who could corroborate all that he had said.

This discussion, most likely softened down and modified by the interpreter, seemed to mollify Sinziecha somewhat. He remained awhile absorbed in thought, and at length gave them to understand that he was glad that he had heard them, that they might repose in peace, and that by-and-by he would give them an answer.

When the room was cleared the Spaniards took counsel together; agreed that their situation was somewhat precarious, but determined to show a bold front, so as not to diminish the reputation which they had of invincible 'children of the sun.' They also agreed to set a watch in military style, to treat their Mexican companions as loyal allies, who were moreover in the same boat with them, to keep their arms in good condition and ready to their hands, and to put Lobo, their dog, on half rations, so as not to let him become too good-humoured.

In the night they heard a noise of people going and coming, which caused Lobo to growl and bark continually, and effectually prevented them from sleeping, had they been so inclined; and the next morning they found about two hundred armed men posted in the spacious courtyard, who, relieved at intervals, never left them subsequently. After their morning meal, which though abundant was not so sumptuous as their supper had been, two nobles made their appearance, who ceremoniously drew a line in the courtyard some paces distant from the door of the hall where they were lodged, and gave them to understand that they must not cross that line without permission, under penalty of their

lives. This arbitrary and discourteous order gave them no little concern ; but Montaña put a cheerful face upon it, and told them to tell their great lord—

‘Ambassadors are we in the house and kingdom of a most noble and puissant monarch. With desire to serve him have we come, and prompt to do all that he may command us, and ready even to do greater things than this which he now orders us in order to show our respect and goodwill.’

The evening meal came in due time ; but as they stood outside their lodgings enjoying the delicious coolness of the evening air, a lurid light from one of the temple towers near them, but invisible from where they stood, lit up a part of the yard, gleaming on the white clothes and bronze ornaments of the soldiers who were guarding them ; and almost simultaneously a hideous din of drums and other dissonant instruments began, above which the hoarse roar of the sacrificial drum of serpent’s skin thrilled their nerves with a new horror. By-and-by a strange, weird noise, the tread of multitudes of bare-footed or sandal-shodded people walking in procession or dancing to a measured cadence, could be distinguished, and the noise of the smaller musical instruments in use among them, joined to voices of men and women singing wild, wailing songs and choruses of such unearthly notes and melody (if melody it could be called) that it made the blood curdle in their veins to hear it.

Their Mexican friends gave them small comfort on this occasion, for they told them that sacrifices in honour (!) of their arrival had begun, and that most likely the crowning sacrifice would be that of their whole party. The fact was that they had arrived on the eve of the annual festival in praise of the god who superintended the harvest, which was always celebrated before the maize ingathering. The Mexicans did not tell them that, but left them to imagine that the ceremony was a prelude to their own sacrifice. Perhaps they themselves thought it not unlikely ; for Montezuma, in the dearth of prisoners of war, often had recourse to extraordinary and even sacrilegious measures to supply the want ; and after all that they had suffered from the Spaniards they probably, though not intending to be treacherous, or not having the chance of being so if they had intended it, were not displeased at giving the Spaniards a ‘bad time’ for once in a way at the hands of people of their own race, though not countrymen or friends of theirs.

They also told the Spaniards that there was one peculiarity about the human sacrifices of Michoacan which made them still more horrible than those of Mexico. The Mexicans sacrificed almost invariably men who were prisoners of war or malefactors, women and children being victims only on rare and exceptional occasions; but the Michoacanese sacrificed not only men, but women and children habitually, and the Spaniards fancied that they could distinguish their shrieks above the songs, the horns and flutes, and the diabolical roar of the serpent's-skin drum.

Montaño says that the King had fully made up his mind to sacrifice them as the climax and conclusion of the feast, and was only restrained from doing so by the remonstrances of one of his chief lords and councillors, who represented to him that his doing so would be a mistake as well as a crime, because Cortes would be sure to resent it and to do his best to punish such a breach of public morality, and that, however dangerous to the peace of the country the arrival of the Spaniards might be, it would always be better to have them as friends than as enemies. Be this as it may, the Spaniards remained thus caged in, and subjected to the torture of hearing those dreadful sounds day and night, and more especially in the night time, seeing the reflection of those lurid altar flames, following in imagination the victims in their procession through the streets, the ascent of the temple stairs, the ghastly ceremony of the sacrifice, done with the speed and horrid deftness that comes from long practice, then the casting down of the quivering body from the summit of the temple, the crowd below hacking it to fragments to make their ghoulish meal; all this they had to endure for eighteen days and nights. In vain they questioned the servants who brought their meals; they politely bowed and refused to say a word. Their meals, too, were a source of horror to them, as they feared that human flesh might be in the stews that were often served; and at every meal they consulted with the Mexicans, who pretended to be able to say which was human flesh and which was not. But the Spaniards were still suspicious, and contented themselves with eating only dishes which were unmistakably fish or vegetables and fruits.

At length, after a night of unusual clamour and what appeared to be infernal orgies, a day of great silence followed. On the next, four nobles came to see them, to summon four Mexicans to a conference with the King. But first Montaño took his

allies apart, and told them that for the sake of the whole party, Mexicans and Spaniards, they ought to speak with boldness and dignity of Cortes, of his great power, his valour, his great superiority in weapons—since his swords and spears were made of a metal much harder and keener than bronze, his crossbows shot a shaft that would pierce through shield, cotton cuirass, and body, his artillery was taken from the thunders of heaven, and one bolt would kill a hundred Indians; that his horses were swifter than stags and fiercer than jaguars, and his dogs were each one a match for a thousand men; that those four now present, with their dog, did not fear his whole army, and that they had refrained from doing any harm hitherto because they had strict orders from their great captain to be friendly to the King of Michoacan.

The four nobles, thus primed, went off with the interpreter, and in all that day did not make their appearance, which added not a little to the consternation of the Spaniards. The next day dawned, and they still did not return; but soon after noon they came with joyful countenances, saying that they had spoken to the King with the same courage and confidence as if Cortes with all his Spaniards and a large army of allies had been at the gates; that the King had heard them with attention, had regaled them well, and had promised, after an interview with the Spaniards, to send them back to Cortes loaded with presents.

The excitement of this good news was still fresh when the King made his appearance with a troop of youths gaily dressed with garlands on their heads, some forty lords, and an immense body of men behind him, which Montañó says numbered 20,000; but we do not know how, under the circumstances, he could have counted them. All were armed, flourished their bows and arrows in their hands, and came shouting in great excitement. The Spaniards, thinking their last hour was come, looked to their weapons, and Peñalosa unmuzzled his dog and held the leash ready to slip, vowing that the King should be the first victim. However, their suspense did not last long. The King came forward, his courtiers following him, into the middle of the courtyard, with his bow all brilliant with gold and precious stones, and a quiver of gold on his shoulder, blazing in the sun with emeralds, topazes, and opals. He waved his hand with a smiling countenance to the Spaniards, who came forward as far as the mark, making their reverence and trying to look as if they had no cause for suspicion

or dissatisfaction. He then went on one side, made a sign, and a troop of Indians brought forward an immense number of wild animals and birds of all kinds, living and dead, which they placed close to the door of the hall where the Spaniards were lodged. Such abundance and variety of game they declared they had never seen in the most successful day's hunt which they had ever witnessed.

Sinziecha then, calling to his chief captain, gave him the outlines of a speech, which he delivered to the chief of the Mexican nobles, who delivered it to the interpreter, and the interpreter to Montaña. The gist of it was that, having been occupied for eighteen days in the autumn festivities to his gods, he had been unable to attend to his guests; but, in proof of his affection for them and for their great captain, he made them that present of game, which he had killed and caught with his own royal hands; that he would never consent to their going further to explore the country, for they would come next to the territory of some ill-disposed people, and he could not allow their great captain to blame him ever so slightly for the death of such brave men; that they might return on the morrow, when he would send a small and mean present as a token of affection to Cortes and (as the annalists say, but we decline to believe it implicitly) of homage to the great King of Castile; and that he would send messages to that effect by some of his principal lords, who would accompany them on their return.

The order about toeing the mark was then rescinded; but we are not aware if Montaña availed himself of it in order to see the town. However they slept better that night, and even the Mexicans admitted that it was now probable that they might return in safety.

The next morning some nobles made their appearance, escorting *peons* who carried bundles, which, when opened out, were found to be finely-worked stuffs of cotton embroidered in colours, some of them with beautiful designs in feather fibres, and others, most lovely in hue and design, altogether made up of feathers; bales of sandals, or perhaps moccasins, of exquisitely prepared deer's skin, white, yellow, and red; and an immense quantity of gold and silver jewellery. These they spread on mats laid down on the floor, a coarse one below, then a finer one, and a still finer one, soft and pliable like cotton stuff, on the top. The larger pile was in the middle of the yard, and this they were told was



for the great captain, while the smaller piles of less costly goods were for the messengers.

The King then came to take leave of them, which he did with great ceremony, trusting their great captain would pardon the mean present which he sent him, repeating his offers of friendship and homage and announcing that eight of his lords, his most private and intimate friends, were to go with them, and that he committed them as such to their care and kindness. He had also ordered a company of attendants to escort them, hunters to chase for them on the road, and porters to carry the baggage, including not only the presents of the morning but the game of the night before.

The Castilians and Mexicans duly responded with much courtesy and ceremony; the King withdrew, the presents were packed up in the matting, and the porters marched on before in single file with the presents, the game, provisions, &c. The annalist says that there were 800 of them, and that they formed so long a file that the first was out of sight before the last had left the yard.

The Spaniards, with light hearts, were just leaving the yard with the Mexican nobles and the eight Michoacnese, when several lords presented themselves, saying that they came in the name of the great lord to tell them that, as that bloodhound was the finest animal he had ever seen, and would be of great use to him to guard his person and his treasures, he requested that they would leave him for him, especially as he should delight in him as a keepsake from such gallant men and 'children of the sun' who had come to visit him; that he could not imagine that they would say him nay, especially as they had plenty more in the Spanish army, but that they might put what price they pleased upon him, as he was ready to send them in return all the silver and gold which he possessed.

This message came like a thunderbolt upon the Spaniards. They reflected that they had a numerous escort of Michoacnese, they had six days' journey before them in King Sinziecha's country, and it seemed to be a snare to take from them their best defence in order to practise some treachery. Peñalosa was so indignant that he could not contain himself; he cursed King Sinziecha, Michoacan, and all its people, and vowed that while he lived he would never part with Lobo, who was his companion from his own native village and the best dog in the New World

into the bargain. Montañó, glumly enough, called the Mexicans to council. Their opinion was that the gods of Michoacan had announced to the King, through their priests, that they were offended that so many strangers and hereditary foes of the country had come and were going away, and had not left them a victim; and that, through the same priests, a compromise had been effected, and that the gods would be content with the sacrifice of that ferocious animal, who had been the death of Indians beyond number; that, in the event of their refusing to give up the dog, they would not be allowed to leave the palace, and that doubtless the lives of the whole party would be sacrificed. Still Peñalosa would not yield, alleging among other things that the pecuniary loss to him would be great, since he would no longer get double pay and double prize money, as he had hitherto done. Montañó answered this objection, pledging his word that if Cortes would not make it good to him he personally would be responsible; the other two men joined him in this, and said that for the sake of the dog they ought not to sacrifice the lives of all the party. So Peñalosa, grimly and silently, tied his dog to a pillar of the courtyard.

On this Montañó, through the interpreter, sent a message to the King that they willingly made that present to so great a monarch, glad that they had something that he thought worthy of his acceptance; that all they had was at his disposal, and that they could not think of accepting payment from a great lord who had made them such presents and treated them so royally. The nobles made a courteous acknowledgment, and the party left the palace like men who have escaped from the jaws of death, Lobo howling and barking in rage and terror at being left behind.

Before they had lost sight of the town they saw fire and smoke ascending from the tower of the principal temple, and heard the hateful sound of the great drum, which, though softened by distance, sent a thrill of horror through their hearts.

So they went on their way, arranging to keep close together, they and the Mexicans, with the Michoacanese lords in the middle, who were to be the first victims in the event of an attack, and at night they kept watch and watch, sleeping with armour buckled on, their swords loose in their sheaths, and their cross-bows all ready.

The third day of their march a party of traders overtook them, who told them that soon after their departure a most solemn procession was arranged. The dog, with fore and hind legs closely

bound to two poles, was carried by four of the principal priests up to the high altar, with music and solemn songs, such as they used at the sacrifice of a captive of the highest rank. Arrived at the fatal spot, the high priest, after asking pardon of their gods for having allowed the other victims to slip through their hands, addressed the whining Lobo in these terms: 'Now, king of wild beasts, with thy death thou hast to expiate the death of so many men of our race, enemies of ours though they be; and the gods will accept thy heart as if it were the hearts of all the Aztecas whom thou hast slain, and will pardon us for not having sacrificed thy masters the Christians when we had them in our power.'

Saying this, they held Lobo firmly on the convex sacrificial stone, so as to draw tight the flesh and skin of the breast; the high priest, with the sacred knife of obsidian, sharp as a razor, made the incision, plunged his hand into the gaping wound, tore out the heart, which, still palpitating, he held for a moment in the sun, and then rubbed with it the grim visage of the idol, while the quivering body was thrown down to the crowd, who eagerly divided it, and took the fragments home to eat solemnly, as if they were partaking of consecrated food.

Never had dog so magnificently tragical an ending.

This tale did not act as a tonic to the nerves of Montaña and his party. The landscape delighted them not, nor the prowess of their Michoacanese escort in the chase; they ate and drank with suspicion; they imagined that enemies were lurking in every bush and in hiding behind every rock. When they reached Tajimaroa they refused to lodge a night in the town, and their distrust only came to an end when they beheld the Lake of Mexico once more, and saw a party of horse from the camp come out to give them joy of their return, as Cortes had begun to be uneasy at their long absence.

### MYTHS OF THE PRECIOUS STONES.

SUN, moon, and stars, flowers and trees, birds, beasts, and fishes, are the objects of sense with which the mythology of every age or country has naturally most busied itself. The need of an explanation of things, like that which has produced our own science, natural history, metaphysics, or even theology, gave rise to the mythology of the past; which, as nothing more than primitive and imperfect science, is still in process of formation not only among the lower races, but among the lower strata of our own civilised societies, in virtue of the same mental laws and exigencies that formed it for the Greeks or Egyptians in the days of old.

That the animate or moving world should excite a more special curiosity than things inanimate and immobile is what we might expect *à priori*; and the conjecture is confirmed by mythology, which exists in much lesser quantity in relation to the mineral kingdom than to any other of the great divisions of our knowledge. Nevertheless, the mythology that has been produced regarding remarkable rocks, fossils, stones, or gems is so similar to that which explains the peculiarities of flowers, trees, animals, or stars, that it may be taken to furnish yet another proof that mythology in general is much more the result of primitive guesses at truth than of forgotten poetical fictions concerning the relations of light and darkness, or the sequence of sunrise and sunset.

The first thing that strikes a wanderer into these less-beaten paths of mythology is that the barrier set up by our later science between the animate and inanimate world (though even about that science is less positive than it once was) no more exists than it does between different kinds of the animate creation. In other words, that a man may as readily interchange forms with a rock or a stone as with a flower, an animal, or a star. We all remember the story of Niobe, how she plumed herself on being the mother of a larger family than the divine mother of Apollo and Diana; and how Latona in consequence avenged herself by the destruction of all Niobe's children save one, so that grief of heart turned her into stone. To early Greek thought there was nothing absurd in such a story, any more than there was in the supposition that Atlas, the man, became Atlas, the mountain; and this

helps to explain why stones have been and still are such common objects of direct worship and reverence ; so much so, indeed, that as late as the sixth century Christian priests had to be bidden to shut their churches against all persons who were in the habit of worshipping upright stones, and that Charlemagne in the ninth century, Edgar in the tenth, and Canute in the eleventh found it necessary to pass special laws prohibiting such idolatry by professing Christians.

The famous Kaaba stone at Mecca is a good case in illustration. According to one theory it was a precious stone in Paradise that fell to the earth at Adam's fall, and was then lost in the slime of the deluge till it was recovered by the angel Gabriel. It was originally a jacinth of such extreme whiteness that it dazzled people's eyes at the distance even of four days' journey, and only gradually became black as it now is from shame and sorrow for the sins of the world.<sup>1</sup> But according to the better opinion, it was not merely a jacinth of Paradise, but the actual guardian angel who, having been sent to watch over Adam therein, was at his fall, and as a punishment for not having more vigilantly executed his trust, changed into a stone, and driven from Paradise, but destined to resume his angelic form when the days of the world are all numbered and finished.<sup>2</sup>

Both Germany and France still bear vestiges of the same capability of thought. In the former you may still be shown upon a certain heath a large stone, embodying a bridal pair and their followers, who were thus transformed because the musicians who attended them continued to play festive airs, though a thunderstorm broke over them as they were driving over the heath.<sup>3</sup> You may still learn a lesson, too, from the petrified form of a girl who, when once gathering flax on a Sunday, swore she would be turned into stone sooner than go home ;<sup>4</sup> or from two great stones, which are really boys, so transfixed for quarrelling over so sacred a thing as a piece of bread, the gift of God to to man.<sup>5</sup>

In France certain of the gigantic stones of Carnac are, in the popular mythology, soldiers so transformed for pursuing St.

<sup>1</sup> Niebuhr's *Travels in Arabia*. Pinkerton, x. 90.

<sup>2</sup> Washington Irving's *Mahomet*, c. iii.

<sup>3</sup> Kuhn, *Norddeutsche Sagen*, 69.

<sup>4</sup> Shaubach, *Niedersächsische Sagen*, 41.

<sup>5</sup> Muellenhof, *Sagen des Holsteins*, 547.

Cornély; whilst others in Brittany are sportsmen and their dogs, so punished for hunting on Sunday; or, as in the case of the so-called Barking Rock, near Bains, a dog that once pursued St. Convoyon, and was by that saint converted into stone.<sup>1</sup> So in the far-off Andaman islands two large boulders are held to be two enormous animals, who, when in the pursuit of the first man and his friends, tried to cross some shallows and stuck fast in the mud, where they now stand. Primitive mythology makes no difficulty over these things, but rather accepts them as the ordinary laws of nature, familiar as the tides or the seasons.

The Andamanese also explain a large block of sandstone with deep incisions in it as the account left by the first man of the origin of things; just as in Europe similar incisions are explained as the finger-marks of giants, or more often of the devil, when attempting to hurl some enormous boulder against a church. It would seem that most German villages still have their *Teufelstein*, or Devil's Stone, connected with some such foolish legend; and the battles of giants or the tricks of devils afforded a ready explanation for those great dark boulder stones of the Silurian strata which in parts of England lie above and in marked contrast to the lighter limestone formation that ought geologically to be the higher of the two, till science adopted the more wonderful hypothesis that glaciers or icebergs had deposited them there, as they moved from the snow-capped mountains or among the frozen seas of North Britain.

The well-known fossil called the Belemnite (from its fancied resemblance to a dart, which in Greek was *βέλεμνον*) is in reality the relic of a marine creature belonging to the class of Dibranchiate Cephalopods, and is most common among the Jurassic mountains of the Continent, where it is known as the Devil's Fingers.<sup>2</sup> Such an appellation accords with the tendency of primitive systems of nomenclature to adopt names for things from reference to some leading mythological existence, as many flowers derived their names from Zeus, Indra, or the Sun, or in Christian times from the Virgin Mary or St. Peter. So Pliny mentions some precious stones called in Greek the Finger or the Eye of Adad, an Assyrian god, sometimes identified with the sun; also a black lustrous stone, called Venus' Hair, from the appearance of red hairs with

<sup>1</sup> Sébillot, *Traditions de la Haute-Bretagne*, i. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Rochholz, *Schweizersagen*, i. 205

which it was marked; and we may guess that many names for stones, at present unexplained, had their origin in a similar way.

The comparative scarcity of precious stones in Europe accounts for the general absence of any mythological nomenclature for them in our modern languages. Most of our names for jewels are from Greek or Latin words that were in use more than 2,000 years ago, and were themselves perhaps of Semitic or Persian origin. Our jasper, for instance, is from the Greek *ἵασπις* (Latin *jaspis*), and that in turn may be from the Semitic *jashpeh*, tough; but we cannot get with any certainty beyond the Greek or Latin term, and the mediæval lapidaries derived it from *aspis*, either because they believed, or believing in consequence, that the gem had its habitat in the head of an asp. In the same way our sapphire is from the Greek *σάπφειρος*, of which the origin is quite lost, though the Greeks meant by the word not our sapphire, of which they had no knowledge, but in all probability our lapis-lazuli.

It is, indeed, remarkable how little is really known about the derivation of our common names for precious stones. The opal comes clearly from the Greek *ὀπάλλιος*, but whence the latter word? A modern German writer says from *ὄψ*, *the eye*, and *ἀλλάττειν*, *to change*, in reference to the variable colour of the stone; whilst an Italian authority prefers for the same reason *οπ*, the root of an obsolete word, *ὀπτω*, *to see*, and *ἄλλος*, *another*.<sup>1</sup> Marbodius, bishop of Rennes in the eleventh century, whose work in Latin hexameters, called 'De Lapidibus Enchiridion,' is among the most interesting extant works on the mineralogy of that time, spoke of it under the title of *ophthalmius*, which derivation perhaps gave rise to the superstition that it was beneficial to the wearer's eyesight. Isidore, bishop of Seville in the seventh century, derived it from the name of a country in India, where it was found; which, if a more probable etymology than the rest, adds further proof of our fundamental ignorance on the matter.

Our word *pearl* suggests similar reflections. Is it a diminutive of *beere*, a berry; is it from *perna*, the Latin for a shell-fish; is it from *perula*, for *sphærule*, a diminutive of *sphæra*; or is it from *perula*, a diminutive for *pera*, from its supposed resemblance to a small bag that used to be suspended round the neck? We may choose between all these, and in any case have good authority. And there is the same difficulty about the Latin word *unio*, for

<sup>1</sup> Kluge, *Handbuch der Edelsteinkunde*, 344.



a pearl. Marbodius verified the common derivation in the following lines :—

Unio dictus ab hoc quod ab una nascitur unus,  
Nec duo vel plures unquam simul inveniuntur.

And in this he followed Pliny.<sup>1</sup> But *unio* was also the Latin for an onion, whence our word for that vegetable and the French *oignon* ; and a passage in Sir John Mandeville's book on stones, in the fourteenth century, supports this less prosaic etymology of the word. Speaking of the pearl he says : 'Marguerite est une pierre appelée oignon, car elle est de plusieurs vêtements ; elle a plusieurs côtes l'une après l'autre comme un oignon.'

The onyx, from the Greek word *ὄνυξ*, a *finger-nail*, which it was supposed to resemble, may have been the cause or the consequence of the following Greek myth regarding it. Cupid, one day finding his mother Venus asleep, pared her nails with the point of one of his arrows, and flew off. But the nail-parings of the goddess fell on the Indian sands, where the Fates, in their zeal lest anything divine should perish, transformed them into onyx.<sup>2</sup> The diminutive for onyx in Italian became *onicolo*, and this passed into *nicolo*. Then the need of a derivation for *nicolo* drove the Italians to the hypothesis of a certain artist, Nicolo, who worked in onyx in preference to any other stone ; or of a certain Nicolaus, which means a conqueror of nations, whence the onyx came to be thought a sure talisman for victory over an enemy.<sup>3</sup> In this way do legend and superstition arise and work together, acting and reacting upon one another, till it is often impossible to say which stands in the relation of parent, and which of offspring each to each.

Our diamond is generally referred to the Greek *ἀδάμας*, which means invincible or unconquerable (from *ἀ*, *not*, and *δαμάω*, *to conquer*), and came to be applied to the diamond because of its hardness, or the supposed inability of fire to melt it. This was the derivation current in Pliny's time, and the one that he accepted. But even if *adamas* does mean the invincible, and is derived as suggested, the older account seems to have been that it was so called, not from its resistance to fire or to the anvil, but from the inability of the gods to resist the prayer of any supplicant

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Nat.* ix. 35. 'In tantum ut nulli duo reperiantur indiscreti, unde nomen unionum romanæ imposuere delicie.'

<sup>2</sup> De Berguem, *Les Merveilles des Indes*, 61.

<sup>3</sup> C. W. King, *Natural History of Precious Stones*, 259-60.

who carried it with him. The ancients, says Onomakritus, a Greek priest of the fifth century before Christ, who wrote a poem on stones and ascribed it to Orpheus, called the Anaktites Adamas, because it conquers the mind of the blessed gods, so that, giving heed to sacrifices, they will deign to take pity upon mortals.<sup>1</sup> But is it not even more likely that the word as applied by the Greeks to the diamond (and not as it was at first to some hard metal) came straight from Adamas, the name of a river, now called the Brahmani, in Bengal, which ran through the oldest diamond country of India, and which is marked on the maps of Ptolemy's Geography? At all events the Greeks supplied themselves with a mythological derivation, for they said that Adamas was the name of a Cretan youth who, for his careful attendance upon Zeus, when that deity was in the cradle, was transformed into a beautiful stone, and also placed among the stars, as the nymphs and goat were, too, who helped to rear that great deity in his helpless infancy.<sup>2</sup>

A similar fancy saw in the amethyst a beautiful youth who was transformed by Diana into that lovely purple-tinted stone which is in reality nothing but rock crystal so coloured by manganese and iron. Bacchus, in memory of his love for the youth, gave to the stone the colour of wine, and at the same time the power to preserve wine-drinkers from the natural results of over-indulgence.<sup>3</sup> Was it this story that gave rise to the Greek derivation of ἀμέθυστον from ἀ, not, μεθύω, to intoxicate, or was the story suggested by the derivation? There is no possibility of determining, but Pliny rejected the common derivation in favour apparently of one that is even still more far-fetched, that is, as meaning not-wine, because, though approaching to the purple of wine, it fell short of it in a tint of violet. But whichever interpretation is right, and perhaps neither is, the belief in the power of the amethyst, like that of a crown of crocus, to defeat the consequences of too much alcohol, continued for many ages, even if it be yet extinct, for we find Marbodius, in singing its praises, describing it as 'facilis sculpi, contrarius ebrietati.' How like the legend of its origin is to that of the origin of Daphne, the laurel, or of Arethusa, the fountain, who, being both of human origin,

<sup>1</sup> Περὶ λίθων, 189.

τὸν δὲ παλαίγενεες μὲν Ἀνάκτιτιν Ἀδάμαντα  
κλέον, ὅτι γνάμπτει μακάρων νόον ὄφρα θυγὰς  
ἄζόμενοι ἐθέλωσιν ἐπιχθονίους ἐλευθεῖν.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Barrera, *Gems and Jewels*, 115.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* 185.

were rescued by the powers on whom they called from importunate lovers, and transformed the one into a tree and the other into water, will be obvious to everyone.

From an island in the Red Sea, called *Topazus*, from a word meaning *to seek*, because it was so beset with fogs that navigators could only find it with difficulty, comes, according to a theory that existed in Pliny's time, the name *topazius* for the stone that was found there. Whence our topaz, of course, though that of the ancients corresponded probably to our chrysolite or peridot, since it was a greenish and soft stone, whereas our topaz is extremely hard and has no appearance of green. Another thing connected the word with topaze, said to have been an Indian town, where it was found accidentally by some quarrymen, and by them mistaken for alabaster.

There seems a greater inherent probability in derivations of the names of stones from the places where they were originally or chiefly found, for, in default of a name bearing allusion to a mythological origin, or to some flower like the hyacinth or heliotrope, to which it might bear some resemblance, no better reason for a name could suggest itself than that it was that of the place whence it came. Accordingly a great number of our stone-names have no more mysterious origin than this. Our jet is from the Latin word for it—*Gagates*, from Gages, the name of a town and river in Lycia. Our agate is from Achates, the old name for the river Drillo in Sicily, where they say it was first found. Our chalcedony is from Chalcedon, near Constantinople. Our turquoise from Turkey, that country having been the chief mart of it from Persia. For our sard we may choose between Sardis, which Pliny adopts, and *sered*, the Persian for yellowish-red, which Mr. King prefers.<sup>1</sup> Our magnet comes to us from Magnesia, though the stone that the early Greeks called *μαγνήτις λίθος* was not the loadstone, but a white silvery stone with no attractive force, and much admired, according to Theophrastus, for its resemblance to silver; nor was it till later that the loadstone, called at first Heraclion, came also to be called *μαγνήτις*, in reference to the same Magnesia, the common country of both. Here again mythology found occasion to step in; for the real origin of the word came to be forgotten, and resort was had to that shepherd called Magnes, who, as Pliny tells us, when one day driving his sheep to pasture on Mount Ida, suddenly found the nails of his

<sup>1</sup> *Precious Stones*, 296.

shoes and the iron tip of his staff adhering to the ground upon which he walked.

Since, therefore, most of our precious stones are of foreign importation, as is proved by the remote birthplace and ancient origin of their names, it would be in vain to expect to find them entering into European mythology like flowers or animals, or other things of common daily occurrence. At most we meet with pearls as the tears of fallen angels, or, according to the fancy of Sir Walter Scott—

See these pearls that long have slept,  
These were tears that naiads wept.

Or, again, we find in Norse mythology a stone that was perhaps the opal formed by the artificer Volundr out of the eyes of little children.<sup>1</sup>

But if we pass to countries where the precious stones are commonly found, or whither they come as frequent objects of commerce, we at once find myths regarding them exactly like those associated with the ordinary surroundings of our lives. Take for instance the Tonquin legend of the origin of pearls. There was once a king of that country so well skilled in magic as to make a bow of pure gold, whose arrows never failed of dealing death, and which, therefore, was a sure guarantee of perpetual victory. This king, being attacked by another, easily defeated the aggressor. The daughter of the conqueror married the son of the conquered king; and the husband prevailed on his wife to obtain possession of the bow and substitute another just like it in its place. This she did in ignorance of its virtues, but the result was that her father was conquered in his turn, and compelled to fly. A demon informing him of the source of his misfortune, he seized his daughter and, drawing his scimitar, prepared to kill her, but before he did so, she had time to predict that in order to afford to future ages an enduring proof of her innocence, the blood that he shed should be turned into pearls. And so it was, for the spot where she was slain is still the place where men discover the loveliest and fairest pearls.<sup>2</sup>

The names *Gorgonia antipathes* for the black coral, and that of the Medusa head for the so-called sea-pollen, are perhaps traceable to a faint recollection of the Greek legend concerning

<sup>1</sup> Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, 1167.

<sup>2</sup> Helvetius, *L'esprit*, ii. 17.

the origin of coral which is told at length in the poem on 'Stones by Onamakritus,' and is repeated by Ovid in the 'Metamorphoses.'<sup>1</sup> In both we may read how Perseus, after he had cut off the Medusa's head, yet felt it necessary to cleanse himself from the pollution even of a murder so beneficial to mankind, and therefore placed the still dripping head on some green sea-weed on the beach whilst he bathed in the waves; and how the daughters of the sea then came and turned the weed into stone, yet so that henceforth it was red instead of green.<sup>2</sup> Our word coral is from the Greek *κοράλλιον*, which in Pliny's time was derived from *κείρειν*, *to shear*, because, from the belief that if touched by the hand the coral would immediately harden into stone, pains were taken to cut it short with a sharp-edged instrument of iron.<sup>3</sup>

Nor is this the only case in which the redness of a stone, like the redness of flowers, has been associated with tales of blood. In the same way that the Fates suffered not even the nail-parings of Venus to be lost, but turned them into onyx, so they suffered not the drops of blood that fled from Ouranos to perish when he was so cruelly maltreated by Saturn, but preserved them for ever in the redly-coloured hæmatite (*αἱματόεις*<sup>4</sup>); another proof of the literalness with which the early Greeks formed those gross conceptions of their original cosmogony which writers of this century have been at such pains to refine and to reduce to mere allegories of natural phenomena. It was exactly in accordance with this old Greek belief about the hæmatite that in the middle ages the blood of Christ was imagined to be diffused through the heliotrope or bloodstone.<sup>5</sup>

Better known than the Greek myth of the coral or the hæmatite is that of the fossilised gum of the pine-tree, which we call amber, and which as the *ἤλεκτρον* of the Greeks and on account of its powers of attraction is the parent word of our term electricity. There were several accounts of the origin of amber. According to one, when Phaethon was struck by a thunderbolt from Zeus into the Eridanus, to save the world from destruction from his bad driving of the sun, his sisters, who bewailed him on

<sup>1</sup> Pliny, *H. N.* xxxvii. 59, mentions Gorgonia as in his day the name for a coral.

<sup>2</sup> Orpheus, *Περὶ Λιβ.* \*v, 504-603. Ovid, *Met.* iv. 730.

<sup>3</sup> Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* xii. 11.

<sup>4</sup> W. Jones, *History of Precious Stones*, 29.

<sup>5</sup> Orpheus, 636.

the banks, became poplars, and the tears they shed turned to drops of amber. With the story that they were the tears shed by the birds Meleagrides for their dead brother Meleager, the most amusing point is Pliny's irritation with Sophocles for having endorsed with his name so great an absurdity. 'What child,' he asks, 'could be so ignorant as to believe in the annual weepings of birds, or to think that their tears could be so large, or that they would go from Greece, where Meleager died, to India to lament him? . . . For a person to say anything so absurd of a thing of such daily occurrence and abundance as amber evinces the greatest contempt for the opinions of mankind, and reaches a pitch of unpunished falsehood that is altogether intolerable.'

The word *ἤλεκτρον* is generally derived from *ἥλιος*, the sun. Pliny says that *elector* was a synonym for the sun. But, though Phaeton drove the chariot of the sun, the transition of the name of the latter to the tears shed by Phaethon's sisters is the reverse of obvious. We must therefore forego the satisfaction of a credible derivation, noticing that the mediæval philologists derived it from *ἀ, not*, and *λέκτρον, a bed*, because the sun brought men from their beds.<sup>1</sup> This derivation is certainly not inferior to many that have been since suggested by philologists of far greater reputation than most scholars of the middle ages.

Of course we have long since left behind us all such fancies about precious stones as those here regathered from the mythology of ancient times. Our more scientific mineralogy is so busied with measuring the specific gravity of stones, of testing them with the blow-pipe, of comparing their relative density, crystallisation, and so forth, that there is no room left for anything like poetry to play round these most beautiful products of nature. Let us not over-estimate our gain. For the possible purposes of artificial reproduction it may be useful to know that the sapphire and ruby are simply transparent blue and red varieties of corundum, containing 98 per cent. of alumina, of conchoidal fracture, and infusible before the blow-pipe; and in any case it is desirable to reduce natural objects to their ultimate analysis; but there is, after all, a certain barrenness in such knowledge, nor is any duller reading brought to light by the printing press than is contained in our scientific mineralogical treatises. The poets themselves have as a rule taken but little notice of the precious stones, using them less as fitting objects of verse in themselves than as similes,

<sup>1</sup> 'Quia homines ἀλέκτρον, i.e. sine lecto, faciat, hoc est a somno excitet.'

as when a songster compares the lips of his mistress to rubies, or her eyes to diamonds, or for descriptions of gaudy magnificence, as when one of the writers of our church hymns thus addresses the new Jerusalem :—

With jasper glow thy bulwarks,  
Thy streets with emeralds blaze,  
The sardius and the topaz  
Unite in thee their rays.

Stephen Herrick affords an illustration of the other use of them :—

Some asked me where the rubies grew,  
And nothing I did say ;  
But with my finger pointed to  
The lips of Julia.

Some asked how pearls did grow, and where ;  
Then spake I to my girle  
To pout her lips, and showed them there  
The quarelets of pearl.

But even science has not entirely broken off from the earlier and more romantic view of minerals, when writers like Theophrastus and Pliny could believe that stones of the same kind differed in gender according to the paler or darker brightness of their rays. 'The transparent and reddish kind,' says Theophrastus, speaking of the carnelian, 'is called the female, and the transparent but darker kind the male;' and Pliny has a similar remark about the sandastros and the cyanus. But it is more surprising to find the same theory in a scientific Italian dictionary of gems of this century; wherein we are informed, for instance, that the first difference between calamites is that of males and females; or, again, that the Sard is the mother of the Amethyst, so that one sees some gems that are sards on one side and amethysts on the other.<sup>1</sup> And in Iceland, where a modern writer asserts the existence of more superstition about stones than even about plants, the *Lausnarstein*, which is really nothing more than the fruit of the plant *Mimosa scandens*, and has to be sought for in an eagle's nest for the same useful virtues in child-birth that made the eagle-stone or the Greek *αἰρητῆς* so desirable a possession, is distinguished as male and female and offspring.<sup>2</sup>

The mention of the eagle-stone, which, besides the virtue indicated, had the additional charms of insuring its possessor's

<sup>1</sup> Robbio, *Dizionario delle Gemme* (1824), 36.

<sup>2</sup> Maurer, *Isländische Sagen*, 180, 1.



sobriety, of increasing his riches, of compelling him to be loved as well as to be victorious and popular, brings us to another aspect of mineralogy which, like its mythology, has been rudely shaken by the cold touch of science. That is, its connection with magic and superstition; for in these mineralogy had its roots and beginnings, like botany, astronomy, or even theology. Indeed, when we reflect on the past history of our race, we may fairly doubt whether, without superstition to foster observation, science of any kind would ever have sprung into being at all; which is a consideration that should make us more tolerant than our newly and with difficulty acquired taste for exact knowledge in general allows us to be.

So rich, in fact, in superstition is the older mineralogy that, beautiful in themselves as are many of the earth's stones, we may almost suspect that the original attraction men found in them lay less in any strong feeling of their beauty than in a desire to employ them for magical and medicinal uses. This is confirmed by the fact that till the real precious stones found their way into Greece from India, the lapis-lazuli, which was the Greek sapphire, was almost the only stone known to the Greeks with much beauty of colour to recommend it.<sup>1</sup> And in the Tirol mountains, where agates, emeralds, garnets, heliotrope, and serpentine are frequently found, they are chiefly valued for superstitious purposes; the agate, for instance, making its wearer proof against serpent bites, or conferring on him the qualities of a good speaker, the emerald strengthening the sight and memory, and drinking-cups of serpentine being security against poison.<sup>2</sup>

When, therefore, we gaze in admiration at the splendid Crown jewels among the Regalia at the Tower, we should not forget, as throwing light upon their history and meaning, that in the reign of Henry III. Hubert de Burgh, Earl of Kent, was accused of having stolen from the King's jewel-house a gem that had the virtue of making its possessor invisible in battle, and of having given it to the King's enemy, Llewellyn, Prince of Wales.<sup>3</sup> Was, then, its primary value that of conferring invisibility in battle, and was the belief in such a faculty of certain stones the motive of the gift of handsome jewels that was made to Joinville and his knights by the Abbot of St. Urban previous to their departure

<sup>1</sup> King, *Precious Stones*, 294.

<sup>2</sup> Alpenburg, *Mythen und Sagen des Tirols*, 411.

<sup>3</sup> Jones, *Precious Stones*, 25.

with Louis IX. on his disastrous crusade, when the usual custom was rather to part with all property at the beginning of such an expedition? Queen Elizabeth, too, was thought to heal disease by the royal touch in virtue of some precious stone in the possession of the Crown of England; <sup>1</sup> and we may suspect that it was not altogether without a political purpose that Ivan IV., the contemporary Czar of Russia, took pains to point out to his ambassador Horsey the surprising virtues of the jewels that appertained to the monarchs of Moscow.

War having been from time immemorial the chief pastime of kings and nobles, it was sufficient, to give the diamond its first rank among stones, that it was supposed, perhaps as the result of a false derivation from *ἀ* and *δαμνάω*, to render its possessor invincible in war, and to enable him to repel an enemy, besides having the minor virtues of averting bad dreams, poison, and insanity, which are all three the peculiar dangers of royalty. The lines of Marbodius on this subject are worth quoting as a general sample of his method in mineralogy. Speaking of the adamas or diamond, he says:

Ad magicas artes idem lapis aptus habetur,  
Indomitumque facit mira virtute gerentem,  
Et noctis lemures et somnia vana repellit.  
Atra venena fugat, rixas et jurgia vincit,  
Insanosque curat, durosque reverberat hostes.

Wherein it is easier to forgive the good bishop his belief in the magical virtues of the diamond than the egregious and most unnecessary false quantity he is guilty of in the last line.

But the diamond was far from being the only stone that was useful, for those who wished to combine safety with bravery in battle. The amethyst was another; for the physician Camillo Leonardus, who wrote the 'Mirror of Stones' (*Lapidum Speculum*) for Cæsar Borgia, speaks of it as the preserver of military men and the giver of victory over an enemy. Other stones all had their virtues, derived in many cases from the most remote days of paganism. The chrysolite could drive away evil spirits. The heliotrope conferred the gift of prophecy. The onyx dispelled sadness, but was a multiplier of strife and quarrelling. Coral kept off storm and thunderbolts from fields, or houses, or ships. Marbodius is full of these things, which certainly, till the seventeenth century, constituted the chief interest of mineralogy.

<sup>1</sup> Jones, *Precious Stones*, 19.

Next, or perhaps equal in importance, to the value of a stone as a pledge of victory in battle with an enemy would stand its capacity to ensure to its possessor the fulfilment of his prayers addressed to the immortal gods. This is what stands out in the poem of Onamakritus on stones, the oldest extant, as their chief interest and purport. The great virtue of the crystal, the adamas, the tree-agate, the jasper, the topaz, the opal, is that the gods cannot resist the spell of their influence. Only let a man go to a temple with a crystal in his hand, and none of the immortals will refuse to hear his prayer.<sup>1</sup>

Did then the same belief in the power of minerals to influence the gods in favour of their petitioners pass from pagan into Christian thought, and even into the services of the new religion? Is this the origin of the great wealth of jewelry expended on shrines, crucifixes, vestments, in the Christian Church? During the whole of the Gothic ages, says Mr. King, rings both in their setting and their stone were designed to act as talismans or amulets;<sup>2</sup> and in the case of the sapphire there is at least strong probability that this magical employment of stones was not disdained in the service of the Church. A decree of Innocent III. in the twelfth century ordained for the future the sapphire should always be the stone used for the rings with which bishops at their investiture were wedded to the Church. The question then arises, Why the sapphire? It has been suggested that the use of this stone had some reference either to the harmony of its colour with the rest of the priestly vestments, or to its supposed efficacy in assisting those who were pledged to celibacy in the due and proper observation of their engagement.<sup>3</sup> But though the sapphire of the ancients may have been our lapis-lazuli, it would have been but natural that the virtues ascribed to the latter under the title of sapphire should have passed to the stone to which the old name was transferred; and one of the principal virtues of the ancient sapphire was that of its inducing the gods to lend a favourable ear to their petitioners. 'When sacrifices were offered,' says De Boot, 'and responses sought from Phœbus, it was thought that he was better pleased, and that it was easier to get anything from him, if the sapphire were exhibited, as it were a sign of concord.'<sup>4</sup> By sapphire he may mean the lapis-lazuli,

<sup>1</sup> τὸν δ' εἶπερ μετὰ χεῖρας ἔχων περὶ νηὸν ἵκηαι  
οὐτὶς τοι μακάρων ἀνήσεται ἐυχωλήσας.

<sup>2</sup> *Antique Gems*, 378.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* 387.

<sup>4</sup> Chap. xlv.

but Marbodius certainly meant our sapphire when he spoke of it as called the holy stone, and ascribed to it the following virtues among others :

Educit carcere victos,  
Obstrictasque fores et vincula tacta resolvit,  
*Pacatumque Deum reddit precibusque faventem.*

We may, therefore, conjecture that the reason why the sapphire became the episcopal stone was, because it was thought to have the same efficacy in regard to prayer that was attributed in ancient times to the lapis-lazuli.

It is strange then that the sapphire, which, in addition to its other merits, possessed that also of keeping a man safe from the influences of fraud, or fear, or envy, should have come in modern superstition to hold the position of an unlucky stone. It is not easy to account for this change of feeling, for nothing is so conservative as superstition, or less liable to freaks and fluctuations. The same is true of that most glorious of all stones, the opal. If any stone deserves worship for its beauty it is the opal ; and so rightly valued at its proper worth was the opal in olden days, that after ages admired the Roman senator who, when Mark Anthony coveted his opal ring, went into voluntary exile, preferring to part with his country rather than his gem.<sup>2</sup> Yet in these days there are numbers of people who will refuse the gift of an opal or sell any they may possess, on account of its bad reputation as a bringer of bad luck and dispeller of affection. Yet it was the reverse of an inauspicious stone in former days. According to Onamakritus, it was one of the stones that would ensure the efficacy of prayer. According to Berquem the opal made its wearer loveable and conciliated love ; it rejoiced the heart, preserved from poison and infection, dissipated melancholy, and strengthened the sight. What then could be more desirable either as a gift or a possession ?

Whence, then, arose the bad reputation of the opal ? Barbot, in his 'Treatise on Precious Stones,' says that it is evidently due to its connection with the legend of Robert the Devil, without explaining further ;<sup>2</sup> whilst sometimes it is traced to the story of the opal in Sir Walter Scott's 'Anne of Geierstein.' It will be remembered that in the weird tale of Anne's grandfather, the Persian lady whom he married possessed a marvellous opal which,

<sup>1</sup> Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* xxxvii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Pierres Précieuses*, 454.

on the day of the christening of their child, when some holy water came in contact with it, first shot out a brilliant spark, and was the next instant 'lightless and colourless as a common pebble.' The Persian heroine fainted and died, and was followed by her husband, Herman of Arnheim, three years afterwards; and their granddaughter, referring to the story, said that she had heard of the opal growing pale, it being the nature of that noble stone to do so on the approach of poison, and Hermione having been thought to have been poisoned by the jealous Baroness Steinfeldt.<sup>1</sup> But it is evident that there is not enough in either of these tales to account for a total change of popular superstition, neither the legend of Robert the Devil nor of the Persian Hermione having ever been sufficiently known to have had the slightest influence on common opinion. Till, therefore, some better explanation can be thought of, the wrong that is at present done to that fairest of all gems, the opal, must be set down as one of those freaks of superstition which are absolutely without justification or reason.

But the superstition that yet lingers about the precious stones represents happily a fast diminishing quantity. Who would think now of attributing to each stone a special influence over each month, and wearing, therefore, the sapphire in April, the agate in May, and so forth? Yet our ancestors did this, and even appropriated to twelve kinds of precious stones the twelve signs of the Zodiac and the twelve Apostles. Perhaps there was some pious intent in making the jasper the symbol of St. Peter, the chrysolite of St. Matthew, or the uncertain beryl of the disbelieving St. Thomas; but the modern spirit needs not these reminders, and their value at any time must have been very doubtful. But, smile as we may at the superstition that ruled in bygone times with regard to precious stones, we have to admit that it was not altogether without its brighter side. In the dark ages, for instance, it can have been no mean happiness to possess gems which, like the sapphire, ensured the fulfilment of prayer, or, like the diamond and amethyst, reduced war to a safe and pleasant pastime. What charm have we wherewith to face the perils and misfortunes of life comparable to the faith in their talisman which supported our ancestors? Who that remembers the agitations of a lawsuit, and the nervous reliance placed in his solicitor, but might regret the faith which in a

<sup>1</sup> B. i., c. xi., and B. ii., c. iv.

previous age and similar plight he might have felt in a morsel of chalcedony?

Science, moreover, in many cases leaves no compensation for the beliefs she dispels. It was no trifling alleviation of the peasant's lot that he might hope any day to find a rich jewel left by a snake in the grass, or vast treasures hidden in a mountain. This hope is now gone or going from him, and perhaps few living Cornish peasants now look for the blue stone ring which their ancestors attributed to the action of snakes breathing upon hazel. Who now that drinks the refreshing Vouvray wine, from Vouvray in France, would ever think that the name of both wine and place had come from an old local belief in a dragon or viper (*vouivre*) that possessed a single eye or carbuncle, which it laid aside on the ground, and which if discovered would lead its finder to immeasurable riches.<sup>1</sup>

The Scotch used to think that stone arrow-heads, which they called elf-shots, and seriously believed to be aimed by the fairies at their cattle, could cure any malady affecting a cow, either by contact with such a stone, or by water in which it had been dipped. They also attributed the same virtue to crystal gems, and to the adder-stone; and Pennant the traveller was shown a stone of this sort set in silver, for the use of which the natives would often travel a distance of a hundred miles, or carry back with them water in which it had been immersed.<sup>2</sup> A foolish faith doubtless, we say, but surely one not without its comfort to the much-enduring farmer class, and better than no hope at all against the many ailments to which cattle is heir.

Nor is it always easy to say where superstition touches upon, and perhaps conceals, higher and better knowledge. Let us disbelieve in and laugh at, as much as we please, these cattle-curing stones of Scotland, or the rain-producing stones of the Orientals, but can we be sure in every case that some germ or basis of truth, destined perhaps to be of use and benefit to mankind, may not underlie certain talismans whose virtues we now treat as so much mythology. The tendency of superstitious formalities and chicanery to crystallise round the most useful practices founded on the truest knowledge is so universal and far-reaching, that we are often tempted to scorn as total imposture what, if carefully ana-

<sup>1</sup> Rochholz, *Schweizersagen*, ii. 7; Menzel, *Zur deutschen Mythologie*, i. 55; Stolber, *Sagen des Elsaasses*, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Pennant's *Tour*. Pinkerton, iii. 51.



lysed, might yield a residuum of solid truth as distinct from its aftergrowth or overgrowth.

As an instance of such talismans lying still in the uncertain borderland between science and superstition, it may not be altogether fanciful to refer to the famous snake-stones so popular in the East for the cure of snake-bites. Sir James Tennant, having once sent some of these stones to the great chemist Faraday for analysis, and the latter having expressed his belief that the one with any power to absorb poison consisted of charred bone, and the others of chalk or some vegetable, the virtue of the genuine stones has perhaps been too hastily discredited, when further inquiry might discover in them a real and valuable cure, not merely for the poison of snake-bites, but for poisons of other kinds. Faraday's verdict was hardly meant to be final, for he gave it rather as his belief than with any dogmatic assurance; and that some snake-stones should be counterfeits only accords with the history of better recognised remedies invested with all the authority that can be given to them by the faculty of medicine.

The two classical descriptions of the snake-stone occur in the French traveller Turpin's 'History of Siam' (1771), and in Thunberg's account of the Cape of Good Hope (1770-9), and their remarks are in every respect deserving of comparison. 'They call snake-stones,' says the former of the Siamese, 'those which cure the venomous bites of snakes. They are black, round, and flat, and thicker in the middle than at the sides. This stone is applied to the bite. If the wound is oval, it sticks to it immediately, and does not fall off till it has extracted all the venom. As soon as it detaches itself it should be put into milk, which draws all the poison from it, otherwise it breaks and becomes useless. The milk into which it is put turns blue and green, a proof of the venom it has extracted. . . . These stones are spread all over India; but one is often deceived, because counterfeits are made, which are found out on using them.'<sup>1</sup> According to Thunberg, these stones were held in such great esteem at the Cape, and sold at so high a price, that but few of the farmers could afford to purchase them. They were imported from the Indies, and especially Malabar. And he proceeds to give the following description of the stone: 'It is round and convex, on one side of a black colour with a pale ash-grey speck in the middle, and tubulated with very minute pores. When thrown

<sup>1</sup> In Pinkerton ix., 619.



into water it causes bubbles to rise, which is a proof of its being genuine, as it is also that if put into the mouth it adheres to the palate. When it is applied to any part that has been bitten by a serpent, it sticks fast to the wound and extracts the poison. As soon as it is saturated it falls off of itself. If it be then put into milk it is supposed to be purified from the poison that it has absorbed, and the milk is said to be turned blue by it. Frequently, however, the wound is scarified by a razor previous to the application of the stone.<sup>1</sup>

Thunberg mentions a case in which it seems to have been used with success when other remedies had failed.<sup>2</sup> Tavernier, also, a century earlier, attests a similar cure; and Sir James Tennant was told by an eye-witness of more than one well-authenticated case of cure by the Pamboo-Kaloo, as it is called in Ceylon, two of which he relates.

It is, therefore, plainly a matter that calls for no further investigation. Turpin's statement that counterfeit snake-stones were often made, together with the fact that they are still in the East a well-known object of manufacture and commerce, and Tavernier's allusion to the popular Indian belief that they came out of serpents' heads, ought not to deter us from submitting the claims of the stone to a more searching scientific trial than has yet been bestowed upon it. Considering the enormous annual loss of life in India through snake-bites, we ought to assure ourselves thoroughly whether there is any stone or any other substance possessing the virtues attributed to it, and whether the cases of cure by it are real or mythological. It is a case as yet for suspense of judgment, not for contemptuous ridicule and denial. If on careful investigation the stone's virtues are proved to be purely fanciful, we are in no worse position than we were before; whereas, should the trial result in a verdict for the stone, we should have discovered a jewel of greater price than rubies or diamonds, since it is impossible to prescribe limits to its possible efficacy; for who shall say that that which is a cure for the bite of a cobra might not be equally serviceable as a preventive of hydrophobia? Poison of every kind is so fatal to human life, the possibilities of nature are so infinite and inexhaustible, and our real knowledge of them still so limited, that we can ill afford out of mere arrogance or idleness to overlook any prospect of remedy that either chance may throw in our way or a widespread belief recommend to our observation.

<sup>1</sup> In Pinkerton, xvi. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* 38, 39.

*CASTLE BELLEISLE.*

THE enormous hills run smoothly down  
 In fold on fold of shaven green,  
 And in the gap a little town  
 Sleeps, and a river moves between.

It bubbled from a heathery hill,  
 And channelled through the grey ribbed sand,  
 And now slides seaward, strong and still,  
 Through hazy leagues of level land.

A stone's throw from its fringing sedge  
 Grey mouldering walls to ruin slip,  
 And from the turret's ragged edge  
 The brimming ivy seems to drip.

Where once the guardian pool was deep  
 The moorhen flaps among the reeds  
 And broad-backed waterlilies sleep,  
 Anchored amid the shifting weeds.

There, where the green turf laps the walls,  
 Slow oxen graze, shrill children play,  
 And when the kindly summer falls  
 Swart sun-browned rustics toss the hay.

A farmstead steams where hung the door,  
 Whence smiling gallants paced the hall—  
 Where roysterers drank, and soldiers swore,  
 The curly cottage-children call.

Here, where the old priest, day by day,  
 Saw sunrise gild his blazoned panes,  
 Between tall stacks of scented hay,  
 A grumbling ciderpress complains.

Look o'er the ill-swung gate, and see  
 The black swine rout the streaming soil,  
 And piled or strewn neglectfully  
 The sordid furniture of toil.

The king that smiled so royally  
Around him, and the sad sweet queen  
With restless children round her knee,  
Are all as they had never been.

Dark in their oozy bed to-night  
They slumber: all about their bones  
The ivy casts his fingers white,  
Whose fibres know the place of stones.

Think of the aching hearts, the sighs,  
This old house heard, which stands so still,  
And all the million memories  
That haunt the hollows of the hill.

Think of the eyes that must have stared  
From those blank windows, on the same  
Grey misty flats through which we fared,  
We twain, and doubted of their name.

O'er grassy mound and marble rim,  
Where one dead friend's poor vesture lies,  
The easy tears unwitting brim  
Decorous lashes, down-dropt eyes.

Or one dear brother whom we miss,—  
We mount with reverent step above:  
'This was his room,' we say, 'and this  
The picture that he used to love.'

In these walls too young hope was high,  
And love was glorious then as now;  
Shall we behold, and pass them by  
Nor write one sorrow on our brow?

Shall we not spare one tear to-day,  
And pray one prayer in order due?  
'Here is a human heart,' we'll say,  
'That beats as yours, and thinks of you.'

## THE GIANT'S ROBE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'VICE VERSÂ.'

'Now does he feel his title  
Hang loose upon him, like a giant's robe  
Upon a dwarfish thief.'—*Macbeth*.

### CHAPTER XV. (*continued*).

#### A DESPERATE REMEDY.



S Caffyn stood there by the window with Holroyd's letter in his hand, he felt an insane temptation for a moment to destroy or retain it. Time was everything just then, and even without the fragment he had been able to read, he could, from his knowledge of the writer, conclude with tolerable certainty that he would not write again without having received an answer to his first letter. 'If I was only alone with it!'

he thought impatiently. But he was a prudent young man, and perfectly aware of the consequences of purloining correspondence, and besides there was Dolly to be reckoned with—she alone had seen the thing as yet. But then she *had* seen it, and was not more likely to hold her tongue about that than any other given subject. No, he could do nothing; he must let things take their own course and be hanged to them!

His gloomy face filled Dolly with a sudden fear; she forgot her dislike, and came timidly up to him and touched his arm. 'What's the matter, Harold?' she faltered. 'Mabel won't be angry. I—I haven't done anything *wrong*, have I, Harold?'

He came out of his reverie to see her upturned face raised to his—and started; his active brain had in that instant decided on a desperate expedient, suggested by the sight of the trouble in her eyes. ‘By Jove, I’ll try!’ he thought; ‘it’s worth it—she’s such a child—I may manage it yet!’

‘Wrong!’ he said impressively, ‘it’s worse than that. My poor Dolly, didn’t you really know what you were doing?’

‘N—no,’ said Dolly; ‘Harold, don’t tease me—don’t tell me what isn’t true . . . it—it frightens me so!’

‘My dear child, what can I tell you? Surely you know that what you did was stealing?’

‘Stealing!’ echoed Dolly, with great surprised eyes. ‘Oh, no, Harold—not *stealing*. Why, of course I shall tell Mabel, and ask her for the stamp afterwards—only if I hadn’t torn it off first, she might throw it away before I could ask, you know!’

‘I’m afraid it was stealing all the same,’ said Caffyn, affecting a sorrowfully compassionate tone; ‘nothing can alter that now, Dolly.’

‘Mabel won’t be angry with me for that, I know,’ said Dolly; ‘she will see how it was really.’

‘If it was only Mabel,’ said Caffyn, ‘we should have no reason to fear; but Mabel can’t do anything for you, poor Dolly! It’s the *law* that punishes these things. You know what law is?—the police, and the judges.’

The piteous change in the child’s face, the dark eyes brimming with rising tears, and the little mouth drawn and trembling, might have touched some men; indeed, even Caffyn felt a languid compunction for what he was doing. But his only chance lay in working upon her fears; he could not afford to be sentimental just then, and so he went on, carefully calculating each word.

‘Oh, I won’t believe it,’ cried Dolly, with a last despairing effort to resist the effect his grave pity was producing; ‘I can’t. Harold, you’re trying to frighten me. I’m not frightened a bit. *Say* you are only in fun!’

But Caffyn turned away in well-feigned distress. ‘Do I look as if it was fun, Dolly?’ he asked, with an effective quiver in his low voice; he had never acted so well as this before. ‘Is that this morning’s paper over there?’ he asked, with a sudden recollection, as he saw the sheet on a little round wicker table. ‘Fetch it, Dolly, will you?’

'I must manage the obstinate little witch somehow,' he thought impatiently, and turned to the police reports, where he remembered that morning to have read the case of an unhappy postman who had stolen stamps from the letters entrusted to him.

He found it now and read it aloud to her. 'If you don't believe me,' he added, 'look for yourself—you can read. Do you see now—those stamps were marked. Well, isn't *this* one marked?'

'Oh, it is!' cried Dolly, 'marked all over! Yes, I do believe you now, Harold. But what shall I do? I know—I'll tell papa—he won't let me go to prison!'

'Why, papa's a lawyer—you know that,' said Caffyn; 'he has to *help* the law—not hinder it. Whatever you do, I shouldn't advise you to tell him, or he would be obliged to do his duty. You don't want to be shut up for years all alone in a dark prison, do you, Dolly? And yet, if what you've done is once found out, nothing can help you—not your father, not your mamma—not Mabel herself—the law's too strong for them all!'

This strange and horrible idea of an unknown power into whose clutches she had suddenly fallen, and from which even love and home were unable to shield her, drove the poor child almost frantic; she clung to him convulsively, with her face white as death, terrified beyond tears. 'Harold!' she cried, seizing his hand in both hers, 'you won't let them! I—I can't go to prison, and leave them all. I don't like the dark. I *couldn't* stay in it till I was grown up, and never see Mabel or Colin or anybody. Tell me what to do—only tell me, and I'll do it!'

Again some quite advanced scoundrels might have hesitated to cast so fearful a shadow over a child's bright life, and the necessity annoyed Caffyn to some extent, but his game was nearly won—there would not be much more of it.

'I mustn't *do* anything for you,' he said; 'if I did my duty, I should have to give you up to—— No, it's all right, Dolly, I should never dream of doing that. But I can do no more. Still, if you choose, you can help *yourself*—and I promise to say nothing about it.'

'How do you mean?' said Dolly; 'if—if I stuck it together and left it?'

'Do you think that wouldn't be seen? It would, though!

No, Dolly, if anyone but you and I catches sight of that letter, it will all be found out—must be!’

‘Do you mean?—oh, no, Harold, I couldn’t *burn* it!’

There was a fire in the grate, for the morning, in spite of the season, had been chilly.

‘Don’t suppose *I* advise you to burn it,’ said Caffyn. ‘It’s a bad business from beginning to end—it’s wrong (at least it isn’t



right) to burn the letter. Only—there’s no other way, if you want to keep out of prison. And if you make up your mind to burn it, Dolly, why you can rely on me to keep the secret. *I* don’t want to see a poor little girl shut up in prison if I can help it, *I* can tell you. But do as you like about it, Dolly; I mustn’t interfere.’

Dolly could bear it no more; she snatched the flimsy foreign



paper, tore it across and flung it into the heart of the fire. Then, as the flames began to play round the edges, she repented, and made a wild dart forward to recover the letter. 'It's Mabel's,' she cried; 'I'm afraid to burn it—I'm afraid!'

But Caffyn caught her, and held her little trembling hands fast in his cool grasp, while the letter that Holroyd had written in Ceylon with such wild secret hopes flared away to a speckled grey rag, and floated lightly up the chimney. 'Too late now, Dolly!' he said, with a ring of triumph in his voice. 'You would only have blistered those pretty little fingers of yours, my child. And now,' he said, indicating the scrap of paper which bore the stamp, 'if you'll take my advice, you'll send that thing after the other.'

For the sake of this paltry bit of coloured paper Dolly had done it all, and now that must go!—she had not even purchased Colin's forgiveness by her wrong—and this last drop in her cup was perhaps the bitterest. She dropped the stamp guiltily between two red-hot coals, watched that too as it burnt, and then threw herself into an arm-chair and sobbed in passionate remorse.

'Oh, why did I do it?' she wailed; 'why did you make me do it, Harold?'

'Come, Dolly, I like that,' said Caffyn, who saw the necessity for having this understood at once. '*I* made you do nothing, if you please—it was all done before I came in. I may think you were very sensible in getting rid of the letter in that way—I do—but you did it of your own accord—remember that.'

'I was quite good half an hour ago,' moaned the child, 'and now I'm a wicked girl—a—a thief! No one will speak to me any more—they'll send me to prison!'

'Now don't talk nonsense,' said Caffyn, a little alarmed, not having expected a child to have such strong feelings about anything. 'And for goodness sake don't cry like that—there's nothing to cry about *now* . . . You're perfectly safe as long as you hold your tongue. You don't suppose I shall tell of you, do you?' (and it really was highly improbable). 'There's nothing to show what you've done. And—and you didn't mean to do anything bad, I know *that*, of course. You needn't make yourself wretched about it. It's only the way the law looks at stealing stamps, you know. Come, I must be off now; can't wait for Mabel any longer. But I must see a smile before I go—just a little one, Juggins—to thank me for helping you out of your scrape, eh?' (Dolly's

mouth relaxed in a very faint smile.) 'That's right—now you're feeling jolly again; cheer up, you can trust me, you know.' And he went out, feeling tolerably secure of her silence.

'It's rough on her, poor little thing!' he soliloquised as he walked briskly away; 'but she'll forget all about it soon enough—children do. And what the deuce could I do? No, I'm glad I looked in just then. Our resuscitated friend won't write again for a month or two—and by that time it will be too late. And if this business comes out (which I don't imagine it ever will) *I've* done nothing anyone could lay hold of. I was very careful about that. I must have it out with Mabel as soon as I can now—there's nothing to be gained by waiting!'

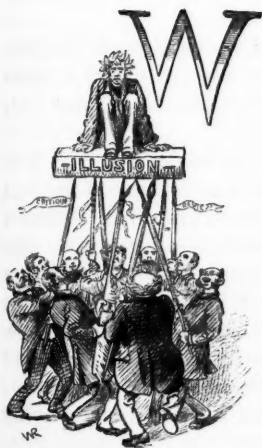
*Would* Dolly forget all about it? She did not like Harold Caffyn, but it never occurred to her to disbelieve the terrible things he had told her. She was firmly convinced that she had done something which, if known, would cut her off completely from home and sympathy and love; she who had hardly known a more than five minutes' sorrow in her happy innocent little life, believed herself a guilty thing with a secret. Henceforth in the shadows there would lurk something more dreadful even than the bogeys with which some foolish nursemaids people shadows for their charges—the gigantic hand of the law, ready to drag her off at any moment from all she loved. And there seemed no help for her anywhere—for had not Harold said that if her father or anyone were to know, they would be obliged to give her up to punishment.

Perhaps if Caffyn had been capable of fully realising what a deadly poison he had been instilling into this poor child's mind, he might have softened matters a little more (provided his object could have been equally well attained thereby), and that is all that can be said for him. But, as it was, he only saw that he must make as deep an impression as he could for the moment, and never doubted that she would forget his words as soon as he should himself.

But if there was some want of thought in the evil he had done, the want of thought in this case arose from a constitutional want of heart.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## A CHANGE OF FRONT.



WELL Jane,' said Mr. Lightowler one evening, when he had invited himself to dine and sleep at the house in Malakoff Terrace, 'I suppose you haven't heard anything of that grand young gentleman of yours yet?'

The Ashburns, with the single exception of Trixie, had remained obstinately indifferent to the celebrity which Mark had so suddenly obtained; it did not occur to most of them indeed that distinction was possible in the course he had taken. Perhaps many of Mahomet's relations thought it a pity that he should abandon his excellent prospects in the caravan business (where he was making him-

self so much respected), for the precarious and unremunerative career of a prophet.

Trixie, however, had followed the book's career with wondering delight; she had bought a copy for herself, Mark not having found himself equal to sending her one, and she had eagerly collected reviews and allusions of all kinds, and tried hard to induce Martha at least to read the book.

Martha had coldly declined. She had something of her mother's hard, unimaginative nature, and read but little fiction; and besides, having from the first sided strongly against Mark, she would not compromise her dignity now by betraying so much interest in his performances. Cuthbert read the book, but in secret, and as he said nothing to its discredit, it may be presumed that he could find no particular fault with it. Mrs. Ashburn would have felt almost inclined, had she known the book was in the house, to order it to be put away from among them like an evil thing, so strong was her prejudice; and her husband, whatever he felt, expressed no interest or curiosity on the subject.

So at Mr. Lightowler's question, which was put more as a

vent for his own outraged feelings than with any real desire for information, Mrs. Ashburn's face assumed its grimmest and coldest expression as she replied—'No, Solomon. Mark has chosen his own road—we neither have nor expect to have any news of him. At this very moment he may be bitterly repenting his folly and disobedience somewhere.'

Upon which Cuthbert observed that he considered that extremely probable, and Mr. Ashburn found courage to ask a question. 'I—I suppose he hasn't come or written to *you* yet, Solomon?' he said.

'No, Matthew,' said his brother-in-law, 'he 'as not. I'd just like to see him coming to me; he wouldn't come twice, I can tell him! No, I tell you, as I told him, I've done with him. When a young man repays all I've spent on him with base ingratitude like that, I wash my hands of him—I say deliberately—I wash my 'ands. Why, he might have worked on at his law, and I'd a' set him up and put him in the way of making his living in a few years; made him a credit to all connected with him, I would! But he's chosen to turn a low scribbler, and starve in a garret, which he'll come to soon enough, and that's what I get for trying to help a nephew. Well, it will be a lesson to me, I know that. Young men have gone off since my young days; a lazy, selfish, conceited lot they are, all of 'em.'

'Not *all*, Solomon,' said his sister. 'I'm sure there are young men still who—— Cuthbert, *how* long was it you stayed at the office after hours to make up your books? Of his own free will, too, Solomon! And *he's* never had anyone to encourage him, or help him on, poor boy!'

Mrs. Ashburn was not without hopes that her brother might be brought to understand in time that the family did not end with Mark, but she might have spared her pains just then.

'Oh,' he said, with a rather contemptuous toss of the head, 'I wasn't hinting. I've nothing partickler against him—*he's* steady enough, I dessay. One of the other kind's enough in a small family, in all conscience! Ah, Jane, if ever a man was regularly taken in by a boy, I was by his brother Mark—a bright, smart, clever young chap he was as I'd wish to see. Give that fellow an education and send him to college, thinks I, and he'll be a credit to you some of these days. And see what's come of it!'

'It's very sad—very sad for all of us, I'm sure,' sighed Mrs. Ashburn.

At this, Trixie, who had been listening to it all with hot cheeks and trembling lips, could hold out no longer.

'You talk of Mark—Uncle and all of you,' she said, looking prettier for her indignation, 'as if he was a disgrace to us all! You seem to think he's starving somewhere in a garret, and unknown to everybody. But he's nothing of the sort—he's famous already, whether you believe it or not. You ought to be proud of him.'

'Beatrix, you forget yourself,' said her mother; 'before your uncle, too!'

'I can't help it,' said Trixie; 'there's no one to speak up for poor Mark but me, ma, and I must. And it's all quite true. I hear all about books and things from—at the Art School where I go, and Mark's book is being talked about *everywhere*! And you needn't be afraid of his coming to you for money, Uncle, for I was told that Mark will be able to get as much money as ever he likes for his next books; he will be quite rich, and all just by writing! And nobody but you here seems to think the worse of him for what he has done! I'll show you what the papers say about him presently. Why, even *your* paper, ma, the "Weekly Horeb," has a long article praising Mark's book this week, so I should think it can't be so very wicked. Wait a minute, and you shall see!'

And Trixie burst impetuously out of the room to fetch the book in which she had pasted the reviews, leaving the others in a rather crestfallen condition, Uncle Solomon especially looking straight in front of him with a fish-like stare, being engaged in trying to assimilate the very novel ideas of a literary career which had just been put before him.

Mrs. Ashburn muttered something about Trixie being always headstrong and never given to serious things, but even she was a little shaken by the unexpected testimony of her favourite oracle, the 'Horeb.'

'Look here, Uncle,' said Trixie, returning with the book and laying it down open before him. 'See what the — says, and the —; oh, and all of them!'

'I don't want to see 'em,' he said, sulkily pushing the book from him. 'Take the things away, child; who cares what they say? They're all at the same scribbling business themselves; o' course they'd crack up one another.'

But he listened with a dull, glazed look in his eyes, and a grunt

now and then, while she read extracts aloud, until by-and-by, in spite of his efforts to repress it, a kind of hard grin of satisfaction began to widen his mouth.

'Where's this precious book to be got?' he said at last.

'Are you so sure he's disgraced you, *now*, Uncle?' demanded Trixie triumphantly.

'Men's praise is of little value,' said Mrs. Ashburn, harshly. 'Your Uncle and we look at what Mark has done from the Christian's standpoint.'

'Well, look here, y'know. Suppose we go into the matter now; let's talk it out a bit,' said Uncle Solomon, coming out of a second brown study. 'What 'ave you got against Mark?'

'What have I got against him, Solomon?' echoed his sister in supreme amazement.

'Yes; what's he done to set you all shaking your heads at?'

'Why, surely there's no need to tell you? Well, first there's his ingratitude to *you*, after all you've done for him!'

'Put me out of the question!' said Mr. Lightowler, with a magnanimous sweep of his hand, 'I can take care of myself, I should 'ope. What *I* want to get at is what he's done to *you*. What do *you* accuse the boy of doing, Matthew, eh?'

Poor little Mr. Ashburn seemed completely overwhelmed by this sudden demand on him. 'I? oh, I—well, Jane has strong views, you know, Solomon, decided opinions on these subjects, and—and so have I!' he concluded feebly.

'Um,' said Mr. Lightowler, half to himself, 'shouldn't a' thought that was what's the matter with *you*! Well, Jane, then I come back to you. What's he done? Come, he hasn't robbed a church, or forged a cheque, has he?'

'If you wish me to tell you what you know perfectly well already, he has, in defiance of what he knows I feel on this subject, connected himself with a thing I strongly disapprove of—a light-minded fiction.'

'Now you know, Jane, that's all your confounded—I'm speaking to you as a brother, you know—your confounded narrer-minded nonsense! Supposing he has written a "light-minded fiction," as you call it, where's the harm of it?'

'With the early training you received together with me, Solomon, I wonder you can ask! You know very well what would have been thought of reading, to say nothing of writing, a novel in

our young days. And it cuts me to the heart to think that a son of mine should place another stumbling-block in the hands of youth.'

'Stumbling grandmother!' cried Mr. Lightowler. 'In our young days, as you say, we didn't go to playhouses, and only read good and improving books, and a dull time we 'ad of it! I don't read novels myself now, having other things to think about. But the world's gone round since then, Jane. Even chapel-folk read these light-minded fictions nowadays, and don't seem to be stumblin' about more than usual.'

'If they take no harm, their own consciences must be their guide; but I've a right to judge for myself as well as they, I think, Solomon.'

'Exactly, but not for them too—that's what *you're* doin', Jane. Who the dickens are you, to go about groaning that Mark's a prodigal son, or a lost sheep, or a goat, or one of those uncomplimentary animals, all because he's written a book that everyone else is praising? Why are you to be right and all the rest of the world wrong, I'd like to know? Here you've gone and hunted the lad out of the house, without ever consulting *me* (who, I think, Jane, I *do* think, have acted so as to deserve to be considered and consulted in the matter), and all for what?'

'I'm sure, Solomon,' said Mrs. Ashburn, with one or two hard sniffs which were her nearest approach to public emotion; 'I'm sure I never expected this from you, and you were quite as angry with Mark as any of us.'

'Because I didn't know all—I was kep' in the dark. From what you said I didn't know but what he'd written some rubbish which wouldn't keep him in bread and cheese for a fortnight, and leave him as unknown as it found him. Naterally I didn't care about *that*, when I'd hoped he'd be a credit to me. But it appears he *is* being a credit to me—he's making his fortune, getting famous, setting the upper circles talking of him. I thought Sir Andrew, up at the Manor House, was a chaffing me the other day when he began complimenting me on my nephew, and I answered him precious short; but I begin to think now as he meant it, and I went and made a fool of myself! All I ever asked of Mark was to be a credit to me, and so long as he goes and is a credit to me, what do I care how he does it? Not *that*!'

At sentiments of such unhoped-for breadth, Trixie was so far carried away by delight and gratitude as to throw her arms round



her uncle's puffy red neck, and bestow two or three warm kisses upon him. 'Then you won't give him up after all, will you, Uncle?' she cried; '*you* don't think him a disgrace to you!'

Uncle Solomon looked round him with the sense that he was coming out uncommonly well. 'There's no narrermindedness about *me*, Trixie, my girl,' he said; 'I never have said, nor I don't say now, that I have given your brother Mark up; he chose not to take the advantages I offered him, and I don't deny feeling put out by it. But what's done can't be helped. I shall give a look into this book of his, and if I see nothing to disapprove of in it, why I shall let him know he can still look to his old uncle if he wants anything. I don't say more than that at present. But I do think, Jane, that you've been too 'ard on the boy. We can't be all such partickler Baptists as *you* are, yer know!'

'I'm glad to hear you say that, Solomon,' quavered Mr. Ashburn, 'because I said as much to Jane (if you recollect my mentioning it, my dear?) at the time; but she has decided views, and she thought otherwise.'

The unfortunate Jane, seeing herself deserted on all sides, began to qualify, not sorry in her inmost heart to be able to think more leniently, since the 'Weekly Horeb' sanctioned it, of her son's act of independence.

'I may have acted on imperfect knowledge,' she said; 'I may have been too hasty in concluding that Mark had only written some worldly and frivolous love-tale to keep minds from dwelling on higher subjects. If so, I'm willing to own it, and if Mark was to come to me——'

But Mr. Lightowler did not care to lose his monopoly of magnanimity in this way. 'That comes too late now, Jane,' he said; 'he won't come back to you now, after the way you've treated him. You've taken your line, and you'll have to keep to it. But he shan't lose by that while *I* live—or afterwards, for that matter—he was always more of a son to me than ever you made of him!'

And when he went to bed, after some elaboration of his views on the question, he left the family, with one exception, to the highly unsatisfactory reflection that they had cut themselves off from all right to feel proud and gratified at Mark's renown, and that the breach between them was too wide now to be bridged.

## CHAPTER XVII.

IN WHICH MARK MAKES AN ENEMY AND RECOVERS A FRIEND.



ARK'S fame was still increasing, and he began to have proofs of this in a pleasanter and more substantial form than empty compliment. He was constantly receiving letters from editors or publishers inviting him to write for them, and offering terms which exceeded his highest expectations. Several of these proposals—all the more tempting ones, in fact—he accepted at once; not that he had anything by him in manuscript just then of the kind required from him, but he felt a vague sense

of power to turn out something very fine indeed, long before the time appointed for fulfilment of his promises.

But so far, he had not done any regular literary work since his defection: he was still at St. Peter's, which occupied most of his time, but somehow, now that he could devote his evenings without scruple to the delights of composition, those delights seemed to have lost their keenness, and besides, he had begun to go out a great deal.

He had plenty of time before him, however, and his prospects were excellent; he was sure of considerable sums under his many agreements as soon as he had leisure to set to work. There could be no greater mistake than for a young writer to flood the market from his inkstand—a reflection which comforted Mark for a rather long and unexpected season of drought.

Chilton and Fladgate had begun to sound him respecting a second book, but Mark could not yet decide whether to make his *coup* with 'One Fair Daughter' or 'Sweet Bells Jangled.' At first he had been feverishly anxious to get a book out which should be legitimately his own as soon as possible, but now, when the time had come, he hung back.

He did not exactly feel any misgivings as to their merits, but he could not help seeing that with every day it was becoming more and more difficult to put 'Illusion' completely in the shade, and that if he meant to effect this, he could afford to neglect no precautions. New and brilliant ideas, necessitating the entire reconstruction of the plots, were constantly occurring to him, and he set impulsively to work, shifting and interpolating, polishing and repolishing, until he must have invested his work with a dazzling glitter—and yet he could not bring himself to part with it.

He was engaged in this manner one Wednesday afternoon in his rooms, when he heard a slow heavy step coming up the stairs, followed by a sharp rap at the door of his bedroom, which adjoined his sitting-room. He shouted to the stranger to come in, and an old gentleman entered presently by the door connecting the two rooms, in whom he recognised Mr. Lightowler's irascible neighbour. He stood there for a few moments without a word, evidently overcome by anger, which Mark supposed was due to annoyance at having first blundered into the bedroom. 'It's old Humpage,' he thought. 'What can he want with *me*?' The other found words at last, beginning with a deadly politeness. 'I see I am in the presence of the right person,' he began. 'I have come to ask you a plain question.' Here he took something from his coat-tail pocket, and threw it on the table before Mark—it was a copy of 'Illusion.' 'I am told you are in the best position to give me information on the subject. Will you kindly give me the name—the *real* name—of the author of this book? I have reasons, valid reasons, for requiring it.' And he glared down at Mark, who had a sudden and disagreeable sensation as if his heart had just turned a somersault. Could this terrible old person have detected him, and if so what would become of him?

Instinct rather than reason kept him from betraying himself by words. 'Th—that's a rather extraordinary question, sir,' he gasped faintly.

'Perhaps it is,' said the other; 'but I've asked it, and I want an answer.'

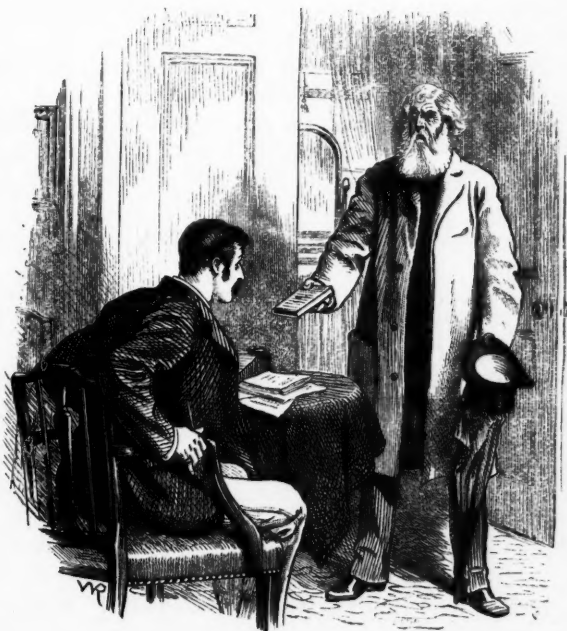
'If the author of the book,' said Mark, 'had wished his real name to be known, I suppose he would have printed it.'

'Have the goodness not to equivocate with me, sir. It's quite useless, as you will understand when I tell you that I happen to *know*.' (He repeated this with withering scorn.) 'I happen to

know the name of the real author of this—this precious production. I had it, let me tell you, on very excellent authority.'

'Who told you?' said Mark, and his voice seemed to him to come from downstairs. Had Holroyd made a confidant of this angry old gentleman?

'A gentleman whose relation I think you have the privilege to be, sir. Come, you see *I* know you, Mr.—Mr. Cyril Ernstone,' he sneered. 'Are you prepared to deny it?'



Mark drew a long sweet breath of relief. What a fright he had had! This old gentleman evidently supposed he had unearthed a great literary secret; but why had it made him so angry?

'Certainly not,' he replied, firm and composed again now. 'I am Mr. Cyril Ernstone. I'm very sorry if it annoys you.'

'It *does* annoy me, sir. I have a right to be annoyed, and you know the reason well enough!'

'Do you know?' said Mark languidly; 'I'm really afraid I don't.'

'Then I'll tell you, sir. In this novel of yours you've put a character called—wait a bit—ah, yes, called Blackshaw, a retired country solicitor, sir.'

'Very likely,' said Mark, who had been getting rather rusty with 'Illusion' of late.

'*I'm* a retired country solicitor, sir! You've made him a man of low character; you show him up all through the book as perpetually mixing in petty squabbles, sir; on one occasion you actually allow him to get drunk. Now what do you mean by it?'

'Good heavens!' said Mark, with a laugh, 'you don't seriously mean to tell me you consider all this personal?'

'I do very seriously mean to tell you so, young gentleman,' said Mr. Humpage, showing his teeth with a kind of snarl.

'There are people who will see personalities in a proposition of Euclid,' said Mark, now completely himself again, and rather amused by the scene; 'I should think you must be one of them, Mr. Humpage. Will it comfort you if I let you know that I—that this book was written months before I first had the pleasure of seeing you?'

'No, sir, not at all. That only shows me more clearly what I knew already. That there has been another hand at work here. I see that uncle of yours behind your back here.'

'Do you though?' said Mark. 'He's not considered literary as a general rule.'

'Oh, he's quite literary enough to be libellous. Just cast your eye over this copy. Your uncle sent this to me as a present, the first work of his nephew. I thought at first he was trying to be friendly again, till I opened the book! Just look at it, sir!' And the old man fumbled through the leaves with his trembling hands. 'Here's a passage where your solicitor is guilty of a bit of sharp practice—underlined by your precious uncle! And here he sets two parties by the ears—underlined by your uncle, in red ink, sir; and it's like that all through the book. Now what do you say?'

'What *can* I say?' said Mark, with a shrug. 'You must really go and fight it out with my uncle; if he is foolish enough to insult you, that's not exactly a reason for coming here to roar at me.'

'You're as bad as he is, every bit. I had him up at sessions over that gander, and he hasn't forgotten it. You had a hand in that affair, too, I remember. Your victim, sir, was never

the same bird again—you'll be pleased to hear that—never the same bird again !'

'Very much to its credit, I'm sure,' said Mark. 'But oblige me by not calling it *my* victim. I don't suppose you'll believe me, but the one offence is as imaginary as the other.'

'I *don't* believe you, sir. I consider that to recommend yourself to your highly respectable uncle, you have deliberately set yourself to blacken my character, which may bear comparison with your own, let me tell you. No words can do justice to such baseness as that !'

'I agree with you. If I had done such a thing no words could ; but as I happen to be quite blameless of the least idea of hurting your feelings, I'm beginning to be rather tired of this, you see, Mr. Humpage.'

'I'm going, sir, I'm going. I've nearly said my say. You have not altered my opinion in the least. I'm not blind, and I saw your face change when you saw me. You were *afraid* of me. You know you were ! What reason but one could you have for that ?'

Of course Mark could have explained even this rather suspicious appearance, but then he would not have improved matters very much ; and so, like many better men, he had to submit to be cruelly misunderstood, when a word might have saved him, although in his case silence was neither quixotic nor heroic.

'I can only say again,' he replied in his haughtiest manner, 'that when this book was written, I had never seen you, nor even heard of your existence. If you don't believe me, I can't help it.'

'You've got your own uncle and your own manner to thank for it if I don't believe you, and I don't. There are ways of juggling with words to make them cover anything, and from all I know of you, you are likely enough to be apt at that sort of thing. I've come here to tell you what I think of you, and I mean to do it before I go. You've abused such talents as you've been gifted with, sir ; gone out of your way to attack a man who never did you any harm. You're a hired literary assassin—that's my opinion of you ! I'm not going to take any legal proceedings against you—I'm not such a fool. If I was a younger man, I might take the law, in the shape of a stout horsewhip, into my own hands ; as it is, I leave you to go your own way, unpunished by me. Only, mark my words—you'll come to no good. There's a rough sort of justice in this world, whatever may be said, and a beginning like yours

will bring its own reward. Some day, sir, you'll be found out for what you are! That's what I came to say!

And he turned on his heel and marched downstairs, leaving Mark with a superstitious fear at his heart at his last words, and some annoyance with Holroyd for having exposed him to this, and even with himself for turning craven at the first panic.

'I must look up that infernal book again!' he thought. 'Holroyd may have libelled half London in it for all I know.'

Now it may be as well to state here that Vincent Holroyd was as guiltless as Mark himself of any intention to portray Mr. Humpage in the pages of 'Illusion'; he had indeed heard of him from the Langtons, but the resemblances in his imaginary solicitor to Dolly's godfather were few and trivial enough, and, like most of such half-unconscious reminiscences, required the aid of a malicious dulness to pass as anything more than mere coincidences.

But the next day while Mark was thinking apprehensively of 'Illusion' as a perfect mine of personalities, the heavy steps were heard again in the passage and up the staircase; he sighed wearily, thinking that perhaps the outraged Mr. Humpage had remembered something more offensive, and had called again to give him the benefit of it.

However, this time the visitor was Mr. Solomon Lightowler, who stood in the doorway with what he meant to be a reassuring smile on his face—though, owing to a certain want of flexibility in his uncle's features, Mark misunderstood it.

'Oh, it's you, is it?' he said bitterly. 'Come in, Uncle, *come* in. You undertook when I saw you last never to speak to me again, but I don't mind if you don't. I had a thorough good blackguarding yesterday from your friend Humpage, so I've got my hand in. Will you curse me sitting down or standing? The other one stood!'

'No, no, it ain't that, my boy. I don't want to use 'ard words. I've come to say, let bygones be bygones. Mark, my boy, I'm proud of yer!'

'What, of a literary man! My dear uncle, you can't be well—or you've lost money.'

'I'm much as usual, thanky, and I haven't lost any money that I know of, and—I *mean* it, Mark, I've read your book.'

'I know you have—so has Humpage,' said Mark.

Uncle Solomon chuckled. 'You made some smart 'its at 'Umpage,' he said. 'When I first saw there was a country solici-



tor in the book, I said to myself, "That's goin' to be 'Umpage," and you 'ad him fine, I *will* say that. I never thought to be so pleased with yer.'

'You need not have shown your pleasure by sending him a marked copy.'

'I was afraid he wouldn't see it if I didn't,' explained Mr. Lightowler, 'and I owed him one over that gander, which he summonsed me for, and got his summons dismissed for his trouble. But I've not forgotten it. P'raps it was going rather far to mark the places; but there, I couldn't 'elp it.'

'Well, I suppose you know that amounts to libel?' said Mark, either from too hazy a recollection of the law on the subject of 'publication' or the desire to give his uncle a lesson.

'Libel! Why, I never wrote anything—only underlined a passage 'ere and there. You don't call that libelling!'

'A judge might, and, any way, Uncle, it's deuced unpleasant for *me*. He was here abusing me all the afternoon—when I never had any idea of putting the hotheaded old idiot into a book. It's too bad—it really is!'

'Umpage won't law me—he's had enough of that. Don't you be afraid, and don't show yourself poor-spirited. You've done me a good turn by showing up 'Umpage as what I believe him to be—what's the good of pretending you never meant it—to me? You don't know how pleased you've made me. It's made a great difference in *your* prospects, young man, I can tell yer!'

'So you told me at the "Cock,"' said Mark.

'I don't mean that way, this time. I dessay I spoke rather 'asty then; I didn't know what sort of littery line you were going to take up with, but if you go on as you've begun, you're all right. And when I have a nephew that makes people talk about him and shows up them that makes themselves unpleasant as neighbours, why, what I say is, Make the most of him! And that brings me to what I've come about. How are you off in the matter o' money, hey?'

Mark was already beginning to feel rather anxious about his expenses. His uncle's cheque was by this time nearly exhausted, his salary at St. Peter's was not high, and, as he had already sent in his resignation, that source of income would dry up very shortly. He had the money paid him for 'Illusion,' but that of course he could not use; he had not sunk low enough for that, though he had no clear ideas what to do with it. He would receive handsome

sums for his next two novels, but that would not be for some time, and meanwhile his expenses had increased with his new life to a degree that surprised himself, for Mark was not a young man of provident habits.

So he gave his uncle to understand that, though he expected to be paid some heavy sums in a few months, his purse was somewhat light at present.

'Why didn't you come to me?' cried his uncle; 'you might a' known *I* shouldn't have stinted you. You've never found me near with you. And now you're getting a big littery pot, and going about among the nobs as I see your name with, why, you must keep up the position you've made—and you shall too! You're quite right to drop the schoolmastering, since you make more money with your scribbling. Your time's valuable now. Set to and scribble away while you're the fashion; make your 'ay while the sun shines, my boy. I'll see yer through it. I want you to do me credit. I want everyone to know that you're not like some of these poor devils, but have got a rich old uncle at your back. You let 'em know that, will yer?'

And, quite in the manner of the traditional stage uncle, he produced his cheque book and wrote a cheque for a handsome sum, intimating that that would be Mark's quarterly allowance while he continued to do him credit, and until he should be independent of it. Mark was almost too astounded for thanks at first by such very unexpected liberality, and something, too, in the old man's coarse satisfaction jarred on him and made him ashamed of himself. But he contrived to express his gratitude at last.

'It's all right,' said Uncle Solomon; 'I don't grudge it yer. You just go on as you've begun.' ('I hope that doesn't mean "making more hits at Humpage,"' thought Mark.) 'You thought you could do without me, but you see you can't; and look here, make a friend of me after this, d'ye hear? Don't do nothing without my advice. I'm a bit older than you are, and p'r'aps I can give you a wrinkle or two, even about littery matters, though you mayn't think it. You needn't a' been afraid your uncle would cast you off, Mark—so long as you're doing well. As I told your mother the other day, there's nothing narrer-minded about me, and if you feel you've a call to write, why, I don't think the worse of you for it. I'm not *that* kind of man.'

And after many more speeches of this kind, in the course of

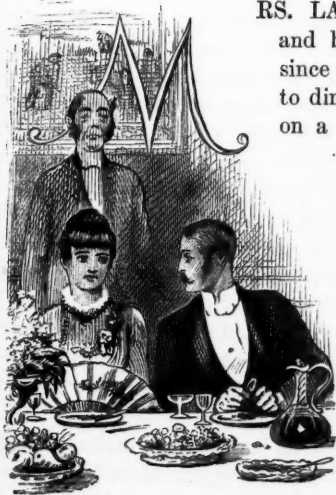
which he fully persuaded himself, and very nearly his nephew, that his views had been of this broad nature from the beginning, and were entirely uninfluenced by events, he left Mark to think over this new turn of fortune's wheel, by which he had provoked a bitter foe and regained a powerful protector, without deserving one more than the other.

He thought lightly enough of the first interview now; it was cheaply bought at the price of the other. 'And after all,' as he said to himself, 'what man has no enemies?'

But only those whose past is quite stainless, or quite stained, can afford to hold their enemies in calm indifference, and although Mark never knew how old Mr. Humpage's enmity was destined to affect him, it was not without influence on his fortunes.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A DINNER PARTY.



RS. LANGTON did not forget Mark; and before many days had gone by since his call, he received an invitation to dine at Kensington Park Gardens on a certain Saturday, to which he counted the days like a school-boy. The hour came at last, and he found himself in the pretty drawing-room once more. There were people there already; a stout judge and his pretty daughter, a meek but eminent conveyancer with a gorgeous wife, and a distinguished professor with a bland subtle smile, a gentle voice and a dangerous eye. Other guests came in afterwards, but Mark hardly saw

them. He talked a little to Mrs. Langton, and Mrs. Langton talked considerably to him during the first few minutes after his entrance, but his thoughts kept wandering, like his eyes, to

Mabel as she moved from group to group in her character of supplementary hostess, for Mrs. Langton's health did not allow her to exert herself on these occasions.

Mabel was looking very lovely that evening, in some soft light dress of pale rose, with a trail of pure white buds and flowers at her shoulder. Mark watched her as she went about, now listening with pretty submission to the gorgeous woman in the ruby velvet and diamond star, who was laying down some 'little new law' of her own, now demurely acknowledging the old judge's semi-paternal compliments, audaciously rallying the learned professor, or laughing brightly at something a spoony-looking, fair-haired youth was saying to her.

Somehow she seemed to Mark to be further removed than ever from him; he was nothing to her amongst all these people; she had not even noticed him yet. He began to be jealous of the judge, and the professor too, and absolutely to hate the spoony youth.

But she came to him at last. Perhaps she had seen him from the first, and felt his dark eyes following her with that pathetic look they had whenever things were not going perfectly well with him. She came now, and was pleased to be gracious to him for a few minutes, till dinner was announced.

Mark heard it with a pang. Now they would be separated, of course; he would be given to the ruby woman, or that tall, keen-faced girl with the *pince-nez*; he would be lucky if he got two minutes' conversation with Mabel in the drawing-room later on. But he waited for instructions resignedly.

'Didn't papa tell you?' she said; 'you are to take me in—if you will?' If he would! He felt a thrill as her light fingers rested on his arm; he could scarcely believe his own good-fortune, even when he found himself seated next to her as the general rustle subsided, and might accept the delightful certainty that she would be there by his side for the next two hours at least.

He forgot to consult his *menu*; he had no very distinct idea of what he ate or drank, or what was going on around him, at least as long as Mabel talked to him. They were just outside the radius of the big centre lamp, and that and the talk around them produced a sort of semi-privacy.

The spoony young man was at Mabel's right hand, to be sure, but he had been sent in with the keen-faced young lady who

came from Girton, where it was well known that the marks she had gained in one of the great Triposes under the old order, would—but for her sex—have placed her very high indeed in the class list. Somebody had told the young man of this, and, as he was from Cambridge too, but had never been placed anywhere except in one or two walking races at Fenner's, it had damped him too much for conversation just yet.

'Have you been down to Chigbourne lately?' Mabel asked Mark suddenly, and her smile and manner showed him that she remembered their first meeting. He took this opportunity of disclaiming all share in the treatment of the unfortunate gander, and was assured that it was quite unnecessary to do so.

'I wish your uncle, Mr. Humpage, thought with you,' he said ruefully, 'but he has quite made up his mind that I am a villain of the deepest dye;' and then, encouraged to confide in her, he told the story of the old gentleman's furious entry and accusation.

Mabel looked rather grave. 'How could he get such an idea into his head?' she said.

'I'm afraid *my* uncle had something to do with that,' said Mark, and explained Mr. Lightowler's conduct.

'It's very, very silly of both of them,' she said; 'and then to drag *you* into the quarrel, too! You know, old Mr. Humpage is not really my uncle—only one of those relations that sound like a prize puzzle when you try to make them out. Dolly always calls him Uncle Antony—he's her godfather. But I wish you hadn't offended him, Mr. Ashburn, I do really. I've heard he can be a very bitter enemy. He has been a very good friend to papa; I believe he gave him almost the very first brief he ever had; and he's kind to all of us. But it's dangerous to offend him. Perhaps you will meet him here some day,' she added, 'and then we may be able to make him see how mistaken he has been.'

'How kind of you to care about it!' said he, and his eyes spoke his gratitude for the frank interest she had taken in his fortunes.

'Of course I care,' said Mabel, looking down as she spoke. 'I can't bear to see anyone I like and respect—as I do poor Uncle Antony—persisting in misjudging *anybody* like that.'

Mark had hoped more from the beginning of this speech than the conclusion quite bore out, but it was delightful to hear her talking something more than society nothings to him. However,

that was ended for the present by the sudden irruption of the spoony young man into the conversation ; he had come out very shattered from a desperate intellectual conflict with the young lady from Girton, to whom he had ventured on a remark which, as he made it, had seemed to him likely to turn out brilliant. ' You know,' he had announced solemnly, ' opinions may differ, but in these things I must say I don't think the exception's *always* the rule—eh ? don't you find that ?' And his neighbour had replied that she thought he had hit upon a profound philosophical truth, and then spoilt it by laughing. After which the young man, thinking internally ' it sounded all right, wonder if it was such bosh as she seems to think,' had fled to Mabel for sanctuary and plunged into an account of his University disasters.

' I should have floored my " General " all right, you know,' he said, ' only I went in for too much poetry.'

' Poetry ?' echoed Mabel, with a slight involuntary accent of surprise.

' Rhymes, you know, not regular poetry !'

' But, Mr. Pidgely, I don't quite see ; why can't you floor generals with rhymes which are not regular poetry ? Are they so particular in the army ?'

' It isn't an army exam. ; it's at Cambridge ; and the rhymes are all the chief tips done into poetry—like " Paley " rhymes, y' know. Paley rhymes give you, for instance, all the miracles or all the parables right off in about four lines of gibberish, and you learn the gibberish and then you're all right. I got through my Little go that way, but I couldn't the General. Fact is, my coach gave me too *many* rhymes !'

' And couldn't you recollect the—the tips without rhymes ?'

' Couldn't remember *with* 'em,' he said. ' I could have corked down the verses all right enough, but the beggars won't take them. I forgot what they were all about, so I had to show up blank papers. And I'd stayed up all one Long too !'

' Working ?' asked Mabel, with some sympathy.

' Well—and cricketing,' he said ingenuously. ' I call it a swindle.'

' He talks quite a dialect of his own,' thought Mabel, surprised. ' Vincent didn't. I wonder if Mr. Ashburn can.'

Mr. Ashburn, after a short period of enforced silence spent in uncharitable feelings respecting fair-haired Mr. Pidgely, had been suddenly attacked by the lady on his left, a plump lady with queer

comic inflections in her voice, the least touch of brogue, and a reputation for daring originality.

'I suppose now,' she began, 'ye've read the new book they're talking so much about—this "Illusion"? And h'wat's your private opinion? I wonder if I'll find a man with the courage to agree with me, for *I* said when I'd come to the last page, "Well, they may say what they like, but I never read such weary rubbish in all me life," and I never did!'

Mark laughed—he could not help it—but it was a laugh of real enjoyment, without the slightest trace of pique or wounded vanity in it. 'I'll make a confession,' he said. 'I do think myself that the book has been luckier than it deserves—only, as the—the man who wrote it is a—a very old friend of mine—you see, I mustn't join in abusing it.'

Mabel heard this and liked Mark the better for it. 'I suppose he couldn't do anything else very well without making a scene,' she thought, 'but he did it very nicely. I hope that woman will find out who he is though; it will be a lesson to her!' Here Mabel was not quite fair, perhaps, for the lady had a right to her opinion, and anything is better than humbug. But she was very needlessly pitying Mark for having to listen to such unpalatable candour, little dreaming how welcome it was to him, or how grateful he felt to his critic. When Mark was free again, after an animated discussion with his candid neighbour, in which each had amused the other and both were on the way to becoming intimate, he found the spoony youth finishing the description of a new figure he had seen in a *cotillon*. 'You all sit down on chairs, don't you know,' he was saying, 'and then the rest come through doors;' and Mabel said, with a spice of malice (for she was being excessively bored), that that must be very pretty and original.

Mr. Langton was chatting ponderously at his end of the table, and Mrs. Langton was being interested at hers by an account the judge's lady was giving of a *protégé* of hers, an imbecile, who made his living by calling neighbours who had to be up early.

'Perhaps it's prejudice,' said Mrs. Langton, 'but I do not think I should like to be called by an *idiot*; he might turn into a maniac some day. They do quite suddenly at times, don't they?' she added, appealing to the professor, 'and that wouldn't be *nice*, you know, if he did. What *would* you do?' she inquired generally.

'Shouldn't get up,' said a rising young barrister.

'I should—under the bed, and scream,' said the lively young



lady he had taken down. And so for some minutes that end of the table applied itself zealously to solving the difficult problem of the proper course to take on being called early by a raving maniac.

Meanwhile Mabel had succeeded in dropping poor Mr. Pidgely and resuming conversation with Mark; this time on ordinary topics—pictures, books, theatres, and people (especially people); he talked well, and the sympathy between them increased.

Then as the dessert was being taken round, Dolly and Colin came in. '*I've* had ices, Mabel,' said the latter confidentially in her ear as he passed her chair on his way to his mother; but Dolly stole quietly in and sat down by her father's side without a word.

'Do you notice any difference in my sister Dolly?' Mabel asked Mark, with a little anxious line on her forehead.

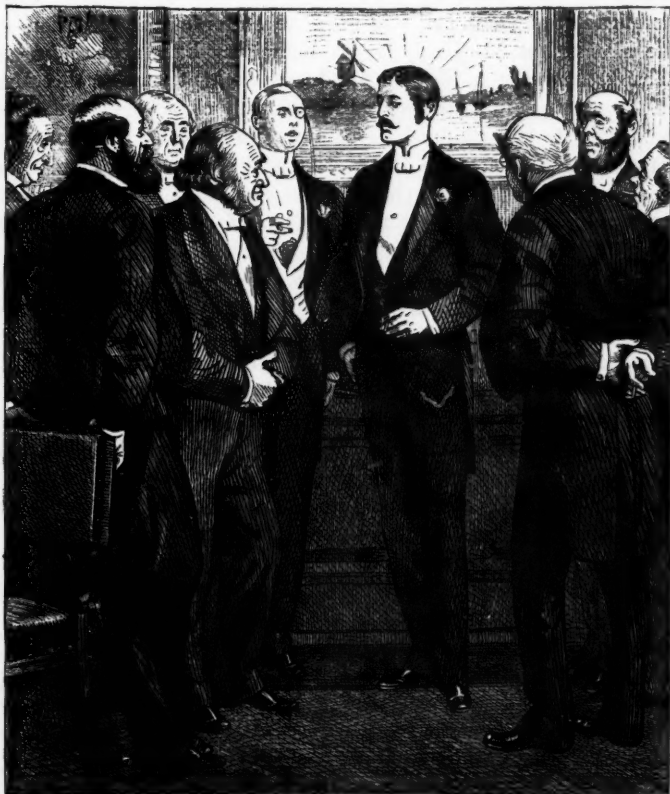
'She is not looking at all well,' said Mark, following the direction of her glance. There certainly was a change in Dolly; she had lost all her usual animation, and sat there silent and constrained, leaving the delicacies with which her father had loaded her plate untouched, and starting nervously whenever he spoke to her. When good-natured Mr. Pidgely displayed his one accomplishment of fashioning a galloping pig out of orange-peel for her amusement, she seemed almost touched by his offering, instead of slightly offended, as the natural Dolly would have been.

'I don't think she is ill,' said Mabel, 'though I was uneasy about that at first. Fräulein and I fancy she must be worrying herself about something, but we can't get her to say what it is, and I don't like to tease her; very likely she is afraid of being laughed at if she tells anybody. But I do so wish I could find out; children can make themselves so terribly wretched over mere trifles sometimes.'

But the hour of 'bereavement,' as Mr. Du Maurier calls it, had come; gloves were being drawn on, the signal was given. Mr. Pidgely, after first carefully barricading the path on his side of the table with his chair, opened the door, and the men, left to themselves, dropped their hypocritical mask of resigned regret as the handle turned on Mrs. Langton's train, and settled down with something very like relief.

Mark of course could not share this, though it is to be feared that even he found some consolation in his cigarette; the sound of Mabel's voice had not ceased to ring in his ears when her father took him by the arm and led him up to be introduced to the professor, who was standing before a picture. The man of science

seemed at first a little astonished at having an ordinary young man presented to him in this way, but when his host explained that Mark was the author of the book of which the professor had been speaking so highly, his manner changed, and he overwhelmed him with his courtly compliments, while the other guests



gathered gradually nearer, envying the fortunate object of so marked a distinction.

But the object himself was horribly uncomfortable; for it appeared that the professor in reading 'Illusion' had been greatly struck by a brilliant simile drawn from some recent scientific discoveries with which he had had some connection, and had even discovered in some passages what he pronounced to be the germ

of a striking theory that had already suggested itself to his own brain, and he was consequently very anxious to find out exactly what was in Mark's mind when he wrote. Before Mark knew where he was, he found himself let in for a scientific discussion with one of the leading authorities on the subject, while nearly every one was listening with interest for his explanation. His forehead grew damp and cold with the horror of the situation—he almost lost his head, for he knew very little about science. Thanks, however, to his recent industry, he kept some recollection of the passages in question, and without any clear idea of what he was going to say, plunged desperately into a long and complicated explanation. He talked the wildest nonsense, but with such confidence that everybody in the room but the professor was impressed. Mark had the mortification of seeing, as the great man heard him out with a quiet dry smile, and a look in his grey eyes which he did not at all like, that he was found out. But the professor only said at the end, 'Well, that's very interesting, Mr. Ashburn, very interesting indeed—you have given me a really considerable insight into your—ah—mental process.' And for the rest of the evening he talked to his host. As he drove home with his wife that night, however, his disappointment found vent: 'Never been so taken in in my life,' he remarked; 'I did think from his book that that young Ernstone and I would have something in common; but I tried him and got nothing out of him but rubbish; probably got the whole thing up out of some British Association speech and forgotten it! I hate your shallow fellows, and 'pon my word I felt strongly inclined to show him up, only I didn't care to annoy Langton!'

'I'm glad you didn't, dear,' said his wife; 'I don't think dinner-parties are good places to show people up in, and really Mr. Ernstone, or Ashburn, whatever his name is, struck me as being so very charming—perhaps you expected too much from him?'

'H'm, I shall know better another time,' he said.

But the incident, even as it was, left Mark with an uncomfortable feeling that his evening had somehow been spoilt, particularly as he did not succeed in getting any further conversation with Mabel in the drawing-room afterwards to make him forget the unpleasantness. Vincent Holroyd's work was still proving itself in some measure an avenger of his wrongs.

*(To be continued)*

## SOME LITERARY RECOLLECTIONS.

## I.

ABOVE all writers, I envy and admire autobiographers. Unhappily the feat of narrating one's own life in print can only be performed once. I should like to do it ever so many times, regarding myself in each case from a new standpoint; but to me it is marvellous how it can be done at all. It doubtless arises from modesty and the total absence of egotism, but for my part I don't remember more than half-a-dozen things that ever happened to me, and still less *when* they happened. There is Scriptural authority for not thinking very highly of the individuals who make a practice of observing 'days and months and times and years,' and so far at least I am a Christian man; but to be able to put every event of one's life into the proper pigeon-hole is nevertheless a gift I envy.

It is necessary, even for the autobiographers, however, to have kept a diary, which unhappily I never did, except for a week or two. I retain a fragment written in boyhood: genuine, but for any benefit I derive from it in the way of assistance to the memory, it might be the Shapira manuscript.

*Sunday.*—Twice to church. Revs. Jones and Robinson preached. A collection. Sixpence? (I wonder why this note of interrogation.)

*Monday.*—Wet. Improved my mind. Duck for supper. Tommy. (Who was Tommy? Or was it an ejaculation? The name of a place never mentioned to ears polite is sometimes associated with the word Tommy to express a catastrophe. Perhaps this was an abbreviation.)

*Tuesday.*—Called on Uncle B.; grumpy and unsociable. Accounts: lucifers and sundries, four pounds.

I suppose I had always a distaste for detail; at all events I seem to have very soon 'dropped off gorged' from these personal memoranda, the perusal of which makes turbid the stream of life from its very source. I can't even remember who 'Uncle B.' was; it was probably a pseudonym for some person in authority of business habits, whose individuality I have forgotten. In the next entry I find a Bishop mentioned.

*Wednesday*.—(No month, or even year, are ever stated; the diary seems, like Shakespeare, to have been 'for all time.') The Bishop called.

Did he? And if so, what did he want? And who was he? Our home was not so overrun with Bishops but that I should have remembered him had he been a real one. My conviction is that this also was a pseudonym. Out of such materials as these, though no doubt attractive to the commentator, it is obviously impossible to construct an autobiography. However 'keen to track suggestion to her inmost cell' might be the writer, he could not compress it within reasonable limits: if, as usual, there is to be prefixed a narrative of his ancestors during the civil wars (mine were all there) and an ample description of his great-grandmother (from whom he inherited his genius), the work would assume portentous dimensions.

For these reasons, an autobiography (which has been more than once requested from my humble pen) is out of the question. On the other hand, I have certain recollections. My mind, though a blank as to dates and even ordinary details, retains personal impressions vividly enough; and it is possible in the case of certain noteworthy persons, with whom during a life of letters I have come in contact, that my reminiscences of them may have some interest. They extend, alas! over many years, but I must premise that I have no 'scandal about Queen Elizabeth,' nor anyone else, to communicate. This is, I feel, a drawback. The cry—

Proclaim the faults they would not show!  
Break lock and seal; betray the trust;  
Keep nothing sacred—

goes forth stronger than ever. But unhappily my memory is so defective that I recollect nothing against these good folk. There were matters amiss with them, doubtless, for they were mortal; but so far as I was concerned—a very young aspirant to fame—they gave me of their best. People talk of the vanity of authors; of their selfish egotism; of their crying out, 'Whip behind!' when some poor fellow would hang on to the footboard of the chariot in which they themselves ride forth so triumphantly. But then some people lie. My experience of men and women of letters—which has been continuous and extends over thirty years—is that for kindness of heart they have no equals.

The profession of healing comprehends, it is true, natures as generous and as gentle, but in that there is (technically speaking) a mixture. I have never known but one absolutely offensive man of letters; and even he was said to be pleasant when sober; though, as I only met him some half-a-dozen times, and his habits were peculiar, it did not give me a fair chance of finding him in that condition.

As a very young man I remember expressing this rose-coloured view of the calling I had made up my mind to follow to Charles Dickens. He put on that comical look of his—every feature full of humorous significance—and turned to John Forster with ‘It is plain our young friend has yet to know—’

It so happened that I never did know—, a circumstance which one can hardly regret. But I have often heard hard things said of Forster himself, in my opinion very unfairly. I can only say that no one could have been gentler, or more encouraging, to a young neophyte in literature than he always was to me. I have never, indeed, found it otherwise in any of those who have made their mark in letters. Even the Reviewers—who are popularly supposed to be a young author’s natural enemies—have been, so far as my experience goes, no exception to this rule. De Quincey had not only very gracious manners, but most generous sympathies. George Brimley, though less genial, was not less kind. Indeed, with the exception of a few young gentlemen, who were ‘nothing if they were not critical,’ and who were trying their prentice hands in not very first-class literary organs, I have always found reviewers at least as quick to appreciate as to condemn. Their power to injure merit, where it really exists, has been absurdly exaggerated, but not more so than their will. The best of them are authors themselves who (notwithstanding the popular sneer) have *not* failed in authorship; and the same circumstances—the love of books, and the society of genial and cultured folk—which mollify the minds of authors, and prevent them from becoming ferocious, have the same effect upon themselves.

It is with authors, however, and not with critics, that I have just now to do. A desk lies before me, of plain make, but mighty size: one that used to hold all sorts of things, from caterpillars (which never spun a thread) to ‘cribs,’ when I was a boy at school; but which, for more than a quarter of a century, has held ‘those dead leaves which keep their green, the noble letters of the dead.’ Their writers were no ordinary men and women; they have all left

name and fame behind them ; but that which smells sweeter to me and blossoms in their dust, is their unfailing kindness. It is not because they are dead and gone that I feel so sure of this. With me Death has never afforded, as it does with so many folks, a cheap asylum for unpleasant people : I think none the better of them for having gone, though I am sincerely glad they went, for I am sure they would not have gone could they have helped it. But when I think of these my Mentors (which most of them were), my heart brims full of gracious memories. I contrast their behaviour to the Young and Struggling with the harshness of the Lawyer, the hardness of the Man of Business, the contempt of the Man of the World, and am proud to belong to their calling.

There are intelligent persons who make a living out of their fellow-creatures by pretending to read character in handwriting. It would be rather hard upon their art to send them half a dozen letters out of this desk. What would they make I wonder, for example, out of this delicate microscopic writing, looking as if it were done with a stylus, and without blot or flaw. The paper is all odds and ends, and not a scrap of it but is covered and crossed. The very flaps of the envelopes, and even the outsides of them, have their message. The reason of this is, that the writer, a lady, had lived in a time when postage was very dear ; like Southey, she used to boast that she could send more for her money by post than any one else ; and when the necessity no longer existed, the custom remained.

How, at her age, her eyes could read what she herself had written, used to puzzle me. She was known to those of the last generation as having written the most graphic and wholesome description of country life of her time ; she was known to their fathers as a writer of historical plays which were performed at the two great national theatres with marked success—two of them, I believe, at the same time. Conceive what a fuss would be made nowadays about any woman in an obscure country village whose dramas were being played by the first actors of the day (Young and Macready were her exponents) at Drury Lane and Covent Garden ! Yet this was the case with Mary Russell Mitford.

‘My “Rienzi,”’ she says in a letter now before me, ‘ran a hundred nights in the best days of the drama.’ She used to tell a capital story anent this play, illustrative of the ignorance of great lawyers of matters outside their own profession. One of her



Majesty's judges was calling on her in her village home, and congratulated her upon the performance of her "Rienzi," which he had just been to see. 'It's an admirable play,' he said. 'Has it any foundation in fact?' 'Well, of course; you have surely read of Rienzi? It's all in Gibbon yonder,' and she pointed to that author's works upon her crowded bookshelves. 'Is it indeed?' he answered; 'then I should like to read about him.' And he took away the *first volume*.

To hear her narrate that story was as good as any play. I seem to see the dear little old lady now, looking like a venerable fairy, with bright sparkling eyes, a clear, incisive voice, and a laugh that carried you away with it. I never saw a woman with such an enjoyment of—I was about to say a joke, but the word is too coarse for her—of a pleasantry. She was the warmest of friends, and with all her love of fun never alluded to their weaknesses. For Talfourd (who did know about 'Rienzi') she had a very affectionate regard. I once told her what was at that time a new story about his 'Ion; a tragedy.' He was very vain of that drama, and never missed an opportunity of seeing it acted, whether in town or country. Some wit, who had this narrated to him, observed, 'But surely he does not go to see "Ion" *now that he has become a judge?*'

How she laughed, and then how grave she looked! 'You would not have told me that story, I am sure, my dear,' she said, laying her hand upon my arm reprovingly, 'if you had known that Talfourd is a great friend of mine.'

She had a right to rebuke me, for there was half a century or so between our ages. I had been introduced to her when a very young man, and had sought her advice about literary matters, with the intention, as usual, of taking my own way at all events. I well remember our first interview. I expected to find the authoress of 'Our Village' in a most picturesque residence, overgrown with honeysuckle and roses, and set in an old-fashioned garden. Her little cottage at Swallowfield, near Reading, did not answer this picture at all. It was a cottage, but not a pretty one, placed where three roads met, with only a piece of green before it. But if the dwelling disappointed me, the owner did not. I was ushered up stairs (for at that time, crippled by rheumatism, she was unable to leave her room) into a small apartment, lined with books from floor to ceiling, and fragrant with flowers; its tenant rose from her armchair with difficulty, but with a sunny

smile and a charming manner bade me welcome.<sup>1</sup> My father had been an old friend of hers, and she spoke of my home and belongings as only a woman can speak of such things. Then we plunged in *medias res*—into men and books.

She seemed to me to have known everybody worth knowing, from the Duke of Wellington (her near neighbour) to the last new verse-maker, whom I had just superseded; he had become the last but one. She talked like an angel, but her views upon poetry, as a calling in life, shocked me not a little. I was in love, of course, and she shocked me even more upon that subject. She said she preferred a marriage *de convenance* to a love match, because it generally turned out better. 'This surprises you,' she said smiling, 'but then I suppose I am the least romantic person that ever wrote plays.'

She was much more proud of her plays (which had even then been well-nigh forgotten) than of the works by which she was so well known, and which at that time brought people from the ends of the earth to see her. I suppose she was one of the earliest English authors who was 'interviewed' by the Americans. She was far from democratic, but always spoke of that nation with great respect. What surprised me much more was her admiration for Louis Napoleon, upon which point, as on many others, we soon agreed to differ. She even approved of the *coup d'état*; concerning which she writes to me a little apologetically, 'My enthusiasm is always ready laid, you know, like a housemaid's fire:' which was very true.

Nothing ever destroyed her faith in those she loved. If I had not known all about him (from my own folk of another generation

<sup>1</sup> In the desk above-mentioned there is a letter of Charles Kingsley's which describes Miss Mitford very graphically as follows:—'I can never forget the little figure rolled up in two chairs in the little Swallowfield room, packed round with books up to the ceiling, on to the floor—the little figure with clothes on, of course, but of no recognised or recognisable pattern; and somewhere out of the upper end of the heap, gleaming under a great deep globular brow, two such eyes as I never, perhaps, saw in any other English woman—though I believe she must have had French blood in her veins, to breed such eyes, and such a tongue, for the beautiful speech which came out of that ugly (it was that) face; and the glitter and depth too of the eyes, like live coals—perfectly honest the while, both lips and eyes—these seemed to me to be attributes of the highest French—or rather Gallic—not of the highest English, woman. In any case, she was a triumph of mind over matter; of spirit over flesh, which gave the lie to all Materialism, and puts Professor Bain out of court—at least out of court with those who use fair induction about the men and women whom they meet and know.'

who had known him well), I should have thought her father had been a patriot and a martyr. She spoke of him as if there had never been such a father—which in a sense was true. He had spent his wife's fortune, and then another which had fallen in to him, and then the 10,000*l.* which 'little Mary' herself had got for him by hitting on the lucky number in a lottery, and was rapidly getting through her own modest earnings, in the same free-handed manner, when good fortune removed him; but she always deemed it an irreparable loss. 'I used to contrive to keep our house in order,' she would say speaking of her literary gains, 'and a little pony carriage, and my dear dear father.' To my mind he seemed like a Mr. Turveydrop, but he had really been a most accomplished and agreeable person, though with nothing sublime about him except his selfishness.

She had the same exaggerated notions of the virtues and talents of her friends (including myself), nay, her sympathies extended even to *their* friends, whom she did not know. Of course she had her prejudices by way of complement; and when she spoke of those who did not please her, her tongue played about their reputations like sheet lightning—for there was much more flash than fork in it.

Literature in those days monopolised its disciples much more than it does now, when 'cultured' persons of all kinds favour the world with their lucubrations. Miss Mitford lived and breathed and moved in an atmosphere of books; and when she was not writing books, she was writing about them.<sup>1</sup> There is hardly any work of merit of that time—I am speaking of thirty years ago—which she does not discuss in these letters, and always with a vehemence of feeling and expression as though it were a thing of life. A bad book—I mean one with distinct faults of style or tone—made her as indignant as a bad man. Her views in this respect were of immense service to me. A young writer who has high spirits (and mine were mountains high in those days) is almost always flippant, and needs the pruning knife. 'Be careful as to style,' she writes; 'give as much character as you can, and as much *truth*, that being the foundation of all merit in literature and art.'

My earliest efforts in story-telling were of a very morbid character; an undisciplined imagination, with ill-health to help it,

<sup>1</sup> 'This is the twelfth letter I have written to-day,' she says on one occasion, apologising for a shorter epistle than usual.

caused me to dwell upon the eerie aspects of life. She warned me against all such monopolising influences. 'Let me tell you what Charles Kingsley told me the first time we ever met. He said that he had flung himself into a remote and bygone historical subject ('Hypatia') in order to escape from the too vivid impressions of the social evils of England at the present day. They pressed upon him, he said, unceasingly and dangerously, and he felt he could not get too soon out of their influence. Once before he had been so carried away by the metaphysics of the elder Coleridge (Derwent Coleridge was his tutor), that he for some years read nothing but science and natural history. So there is a fear.'

Her own mind was a most wholesome one. She delighted in simple pleasures, kind natures, and enthusiastic people; her love for the country approached idolatry.

'So you do not write out of doors? I *do*—but in a very anti-pastoral manner, sitting in a great chair at a table. I am writing so at this moment at a corner of the house under a beautiful acacia tree with as many snowy tassels as leaves. It is waving its world of fragrance over my head, mingled with the orange-like odours of a syringa bush; and there is a jar of pinks and roses on the table. I have a love of sweet smells that amounts to a passion. My chief reason, however, just now for being here, is that it is a means of enjoying the fresh air without fatigue. I am still unable to obtain it in any other way than this, and by being led in the pony-chair most ignominiously at a foot's pace through the lanes.'

The smallest object in nature was not beneath her notice, and any occurrence of the simplest sort connected with natural beauty impressed itself on her mind. 'A night or two ago my maid K. (that initial, by which she is always called, stands for her very Scriptural but most unmusical name of Keren-happuch), while putting me to bed, burst into a series of exclamations which it was impossible to stop: her attention, however, was clearly fixed upon the candlestick, and, following her eyes, I saw what seemed a dusky caterpillar; it moved, and then appeared the bright reflection of a tiny spot of greenish light, now increasing, now diminishing, according to the position of the insect. It was a glow-worm. Upon the table were two jars of flowers, and one of wild woodbine from the lane had only just been taken away. With one or other of those flowers it doubtless came. But was it not singular? Extinguishing the candle, I sent the candlestick down

to the little court in front of the house, where it was deposited upon the turf, and in ten minutes my visitor had crawled out upon the grass, where it will, I trust, live out its little life in peace. K., who has lived with me fifteen years (and whom you must learn to know and like), said, knowing how fond I used to be of these stars of the earth, that, "now I could not go to them, they came to me."

She was exceedingly attached to this domestic, and had therefore, as usual, the highest admiration for her. 'K. is a great curiosity; by far the cleverest woman in these parts, not in a literary way [this was not to disappoint me, who was all for literature], but in everything that is useful. She could make a court dress for a duchess, or cook a dinner for a Lord Mayor; but her principal talent is shown in managing everybody whom she comes near, especially her husband and myself. She keeps the money of both, and never allows either of us to spend sixpence without her knowledge, and is quite inflexible in case she happens to disapprove of the intended expenditure. You should see the manner in which she makes Sam reckon with her, and her contempt for all women who do not manage their husbands.'

This is surely a homely picture, very characteristic, and appropriate to the authoress of 'Our Village.' She detested everything affected and artificial, of course, and what she would have said of the æsthetic and classical writers of the present day who call our old favourites, in despite of custom, by new-fangled names (such as Kikero for Cicero), I tremble to think!

I suppose in my brand-new University 'culture,' I had found something amiss with the pronunciation of the names in one of her plays, for she writes: 'The false quantity in "Foscari" is derived from the Kembles: John Kemble, Mrs. Siddons, Charles Kemble (I don't know about Mrs. Fanny), all anglicised proper names as Shakespeare did before them. Indeed it is the best way to avoid discrepancies, and I have always found the most accomplished persons doing it whenever they can, and eschewing foreign pronunciation as they eschew French phrases—one of those worst vulgarities that smack of Theodore Hook and the silver fork school. Remember, too, that my play was written before the publication of Lord Byron's.'

What an impression of the lapse of time does that sentence give us! Here is another. Speaking of Haydon, whose *Life* by Tom Taylor had just appeared, she says: 'When I and Wordsworth and Keats, and many others, my betters, first knew him, and were

writing, as if in concert, sonnets to him,' &c. : it makes me feel a veteran, indeed, to remember that I once was intimate with a contemporary of such writers. De Quincey, however—of whom more hereafter—to whom Miss Mitford was so good as to introduce me, though born in the same year, was connected with a still earlier race of literary giants.

Besides her general admiration for good books of all sorts, Miss Mitford had an especial fondness for those writers who had sung the beauties of the neighbourhood in which she dwelt, or were otherwise connected with it. I believe she loved Gray the better because Stoke Pogis was the churchyard he immortalised; that Pope was dearer to her for his lines on her beloved Windsor Forest; that her favourite, Burke, had a greater attraction for her from his having chosen Beaconsfield for his place of retirement; and that she admired Milton, even more than her fine taste inclined her to do, from his having lived at Chalfont.

It was for this reason, perhaps, though he had very real merits of his own, that Thomas Noel's verses so delighted her. He was the only man of letters whom at that time I knew, and all that I could tell her about him was interesting to her. He lived a very retired life in a secluded cottage at Boyne Hill, near Maidenhead, where he cultivated his garden and his muse. I believe he was related to Lord Byron, a circumstance which, combined with certain 'peculiar views' (as they were then called) upon religious matters, caused him to be regarded somewhat askance by his more commonplace neighbours. There was a rumour—whether true or not, I cannot say—that on the death of a favourite child, he preferred to bury it in his own grounds rather than in the churchyard, which disturbed the minds of the good folk in those parts not a little, and caused me, until I came to know him well, to feel a 'fearful joy' in his society.

He was a very dark, handsome man, of reserved demeanour, and, so far, might have sat for one of his relative's stagey heroes, but he was in reality of a most gracious nature. I have letters from him, written to me when quite a boy, of a very interesting kind. He lived more out of the world than even the little lady at Swallowfield, and quite as much in books. These, however, were of a less modern kind. I never knew a man so well acquainted with the Elizabethan dramatists, or who could quote from them so opportunely. From one of them, perhaps, he drew his inspiration for the somewhat old-fashioned inscription on the spring in his garden, but the lines have a freshness of their own :—



Toads, and newts, and snails, avaunt !  
 Come not near, nor dwell,  
 Where the dapper Fairies haunt,  
 By this crystal well.  
 But upon the moss-tufts damp  
 In the summer night,  
 Let the glow-worm from her lamp  
 Sprinkle starry light :  
 And the butterfly by day  
 Here her painted wings display ;  
 And the humming bee be heard,  
 And the pretty lady-bird,  
 Clad in scarlet dropt with jet,  
 Here her tiny footsteps set ;  
 And the russet-suited wren,  
 Ever skipping out of ken,  
 And, in gayer plumage vested,  
 His wee brother, golden-crested,  
 Plying each his busy bill,  
 Hither come, and peck at will ;  
 And the redbreast on the brink  
 Of this basin, perch and drink,  
 Elf-folk such in favour hold : —  
 And if aught of human mould,  
 Wending hitherward its way,  
 Haply here awhile should linger,  
 Let it heed this rhymed lay,  
 Harmless keep both foot and finger  
 And propitious glances fling  
 On the smiling Fairy-Spring.

Thomas Noel's mind invested all the scenes about him—and indeed they were fair enough to evoke it—with its own poetry. In the 'Recollections of a Literary Life' Miss Mitford has devoted a chapter to him, but unfortunately these two friends on paper never met. The one was too much of an invalid, the other of a recluse, to surmount even the few miles that lay between them. They were both passionately attached to river scenery, and Noel's 'Thames Voyage' was one of her favourite poems. His description of the swan and her family used to strike her as very tender and graphic.

Lo ! a sailing swan, with a little fleet  
 Of cygnets by her side,  
 Pushing her snowy bosom sweet  
 Against the bubbling tide !

And see—was ever a lovelier sight ?  
 One little bird afloat  
 On its mother's back, 'neath her wing so white !  
 A beauteous living boat.



The threatful male, as he sails ahead  
 Like a champion proud and brave,  
 - Makes, with his ruffling plumes outspread,  
 Fierce jerks along the wave.

He tramples the stream, as we pass him by,—  
 In wrath from its surface springs,  
 And after our boat begins to fly  
 With loudly flapping wings.

Thomas Noel's lines on 'Clifden Spring' should be known to every lover of the Thames; but they are not known. Poetry did not even bring him fame, though it was its own exceeding great reward.

Rhyme-craft, many-hued mosaic  
 Of the mind, which souls prosaic  
 Sneer at in their cold conceit,  
 Is it not a pastime sweet?  
 Oh! what twirling of the brains!  
 Painful pleasures! pleasing pains!  
 Oh! what making, marring, mending!  
 Patching, paring and perpending!  
 Oh! what hope, and fear, and doubt,  
 Putting in, and pulling out,  
 Till a word is found to fit!  
 Then what joy is like to it?

Brother bards, and bardlings all,  
 Ye, who up Parnassus crawl,  
 Ye who, at a rate surprising,  
 Set your brains teetotum-ising—  
 Boldly I appeal to you;  
 Say, is not my picture true?  
 Ye, whom mammon-slaves deem daft,  
 Have I slandered sweet rhyme-craft?

What Thomas Noel was known, far and wide, for, was his 'Pauper's Drive,' of which the second verse often rings in my memory.

Oh, where are the mourners? Alas! there are none;—  
 He has left not a gap in the world now he's gone;  
 Not a tear in the eye of child, woman, or man:—  
 To the grave with his carcase as fast as you can.  
 'Rattle his bones over the stones;  
 He's *only* a pauper, whom nobody owns!'

This poem, until Miss Mitford rescued it from the almost still-born little volume of poems entitled 'Rymes and Roundelayes,' was always attributed to another Thomas—Thomas Hood.

It has been conjectured from the extreme polish and attraction of her letters, that Miss Mitford wrote them with a view to

their publication ; but this I am sure was not the case. She often described to different correspondents the same occurrence ; and indeed I think that very incident of the glow-worm, above mentioned, is narrated in another place. In her day, letter-writing was an art of itself, and literary folk, not being so continuously employed in their profession as they are now, could afford to practise it. In the next generation authors did not write long letters, very seldom indeed wrote letters at all, with the exception of Charles Dickens, whose genius was so superabundant that he gave of it in all kinds, and, as it were, with both hands.

Miss Mitford herself never knew him ; ill health and, I am sorry to add, poverty, kept her for many years remote from society of all kinds, which was another reason doubtless why she devoted herself so much to letter-writing. She corresponded with scores of persons whom she had never met face to face. In this way she had very considerable influence in the world of letters, which was always at the service of her friends. She was never tired of thus furthering my own ends, even when she did not quite approve of them. I have set down, elsewhere, the admirable advice with which she favoured me ; the endeavours she made to turn a very young gentleman, of unsettled prospects and feverish hopes, to embrace some calling less precarious than that which (as poor Leitch Ritchie used to say), 'I hate to hear called "Light Literature."' Never had a Telemachus so wise and kind a Mentor ; but it was all of no use. I made my own bed, and have lain upon it ever since with tolerable comfort. At last she gave it up, and helped me as I wanted to be helped, not with the apostle's lukewarm assent, 'You will have trouble, but I spare you,' but with the liveliest interest. 'I should like to spoil you, my dear, very much, if I had the means,' she writes ; 'as it is, I am like Ailie Dinmont, who, when accused of giving the children their own way, replied, 'Eh, puir things, I hae nothing else to gie 'em !'

I had been brought up in the country, without the least link to literature in any direction, and she gave me introductions to everybody I wanted to know. They were of immense advantage to me, but one of the greatest gratifications they afforded me was that through one of them I became the humble means of establishing friendly relations between her and another large-hearted woman of letters, of whom Miss Mitford had at that time an unfavourable opinion—Harriet Martineau.

At first she seems to have hesitated to put herself in commu-

nication with her sister authoress. 'I never saw Miss Martineau but once in my life, and have not happened to know, or to care for, the same people. Moreover, dear friend, without being in the slightest degree bigoted or prudish, I have, to say the least, no sympathy with her. . . . The truth is, although a clever woman, there is nothing about her that tempts one into a forgetfulness of faults as in George Sand. She is not, to my fancy, a woman of genius; all her works are incomplete. Indeed the only things of hers I ever liked were her political economy stories, which I used to read skipping the political economy. Fifty years hence she will be heard of as one of the curiosities of our age, but she will not be read. This is my Harriet Martineau creed. Nevertheless, if you still wish an introduction, why, you have a thousand claims upon me, and at a word I will put my prejudices into my pocket, and send you the best I can concoct.'

In spite of this, I had the audacity to be importunate. I had a great desire to be acquainted with the authoress of 'Deerbrook,' and I was going up to Lakeland where she lived. To my reiterated request, Miss Mitford, with her usual kindness and good nature, gave way at once.

'I cannot bear to think, my dear friend, that you should have such good reason to believe me what in reality I am not, a ferocious bigot or a starched prude; so I do what I ought to have done before, and send you a note to Miss Martineau, who is beyond all doubt a remarkable woman. I have never read her History, and did not fancy her novels, especially the one where she compares (?) her black hero with Napoleon, and even accuses the great Emperor of killing him by cold and starvation; but I agree with you that her boys' stories are charming—how could I ever forget them!—while her papers on Deafness and Invalid Life are full of thought and feeling. I have, at all events, now done my best for her in presenting to her a very different sort of visitor from those who commonly present themselves at our doors with letters of introduction. Would you like one to De Quincey? Mr. F——, the American, who during his last year in England was one of the favourite habitués of Rogers, and familiar with all that is current in London, saw no one, he says, equal to De Quincey, and calls him "the most courtly gentleman in Europe." He is certainly the finest living writer of English prose.'

*(To be continued occasionally.)*

THE METROPOLITAN EDITOR'S SONG.

BY A PROVINCIAL ASPIRANT.

My priestly right's a mystery still,  
 And who will dare to ask it?  
 With odds and ends of soul I fill  
 The sacrificial basket.  
 In vain you preach progressive truth,  
 And fancy you'll reform me;  
 The glorious holocaust of youth  
 Still flares away to warm me.

*Chorus.* So heap the altar, pour the wine!  
 Young life, a crimson fluid,  
 Shall cheer the gods whene'er they dine,  
 As long as I'm the Druid.

Here, devil, break again this bit  
 Of broken aspiration,  
 And let that wasted love be lit  
 To swell my waste cremation;  
 And as for yonder brain—let's see—  
 Well, pitch it in the gutter:  
 No, fling it on the fire for me;  
 I want to see it sputter!

*Chorus.* So heap the altar &c.

Some coxcomb here is all for soul—  
 My magazine wants heating—  
 So sends a heart alive and whole:  
 Confound the thing—it's beating!

Cold water ! quick ! Why stare and start ?  
Antiquity's defender,  
'Tis what I hate the most—a heart,  
Especially when tender.

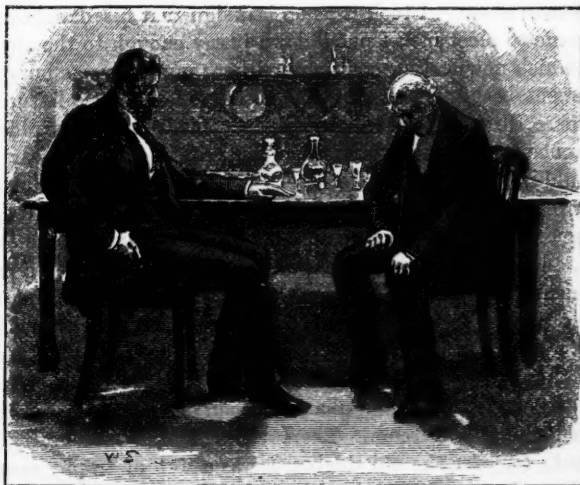
*Chorus.* So heap the altar &c.

The new and young, away with them  
To fire or crucifixion !  
For London and Jerusalem  
Were always of conviction  
That no good thing can come to hand,  
Or beautiful or witty,  
From Nazareth or Sunderland,  
Or any heathen city.

*Chorus.* So heap the altar, pour the wine !  
Young life, a crimson fluid,  
Shall cheer the gods whene'er they dine,  
As long as I'm the Druid.

*MY POOR WIFE.*

## PART II.



## CHAPTER III.

It was clear that no time was to be lost. If I would secure the prize, I must close my ears to the voice of prudence. The unasked confidences of my travelling-companion had strengthened my belief that my marriage would not be an imprudent one even from a money point of view; I must be content with this probability; there was no time for further inquiry. Who could prophesy the next move of this wild youth? On the very next-day he might come galloping over, and, forgetting all his fine determination of speaking to the girl's father, fling himself on his knees on the gravel path before the girl herself. His talk about the girl's extraordinary simplicity I dismissed with a smile. That was my error. I confess my mistake. I ought to have read between his fantastic speeches the truth of the poor child's ignorance of life and inability to understand its intricacies. I confess my mistake, when it is too late; but I cannot bear to linger over it. I have

not the heart to moralise on this sad error, which might have ruined my career. Let love plead for me ! Let it suffice that I made up my mind to speak, and to speak on that very evening.

Though my mind was full of my purpose, I could not help smiling at the eccentricity of my host. It was not far from dinner-time when I reached the old house, and I found the old gentleman alone. I took it as no bad sign that his daughter did not come to meet me ; I put it down justly enough to the shyness with which new feeling had inspired her ; my fancy was busy with her sweet bashfulness. But my host gave me little leisure for dreams. He still kept up the little comedy of philosophic indifference to his good fortune, but was bothered by the fear that I should mistake his indifference for ingratitude. He fluttered about me with fussy little attentions. He pressed my hand again and again in both of his ; he insisted on accompanying me to my room, and himself lighted my candles. He pointed with a pride, at which he made haste to laugh, to the fact that even at that time of year they could provide me with flowers for my mantel-piece. I did not need to be told whose little hands had placed them there. But though I smiled not unkindly at the old gentleman's eccentricities, I did not feel inclined to laugh, until we entered the dining-room. There the climax of absurdity was reached ; for over the old sideboard was a sort of trophy erected, with FIAT JUSTITIA writ large like a church decoration, and a trite old proverb in honour of helpful friends. Luckily, it was easy to explain my laughter as the result of surprise and modesty acting on the nerves. We were only three at dinner, not counting that beast of a dog ; and neither of my human companions was in a mood to be critical of me. My public life had brought me in contact with the strange decorations of platforms and halls ; but to find them rivalled in the old-fashioned oak-panelled dining-room of private life was irresistibly comical.

When dinner was done the dear child left us. The squire, though he cared little for wine, respected the old custom of sitting with the decanters ; and on this occasion for the first time I was glad of it. I should have liked to delay my communication ; but the thought of the wild youth in the neighbourhood made silence impossible. As briefly and as simply as I could I told the old gentleman of my love.

'You must have seen it,' I said, as I noticed the trembling of his hands.



'Yes, yes,' he answered, 'I saw it; of course I saw it—I saw something.' I was doubtful of the strict accuracy of this statement, as I marked the nervous flutter, which he could not hide. 'But she's a child,' he cried rather sharply; 'she's a child, you know.'

'And you have not seen,' I said sadly, 'that lately—only lately—the child has been growing into a woman?'

'No,' he answered, 'no, no, no.'

'At least,' I asked, with a faint tone of injury in my voice, 'at least I may hope that you have no personal objection to me?' He laid a rather shaky hand upon my sleeve, as if he would beg me to say no more till he had found his voice again.

'You must know what I think of you,' he said, 'how highly, how very highly!' As I said nothing, he began again presently, with a watery smile, 'It has given me a higher idea of political life than I have held since my salad days, to know that you are a rising man, that you will be a great man, a leader, a——'

'Put that on one side,' I said promptly; 'don't consider that; it's a risky career; a man's scruples may make him a failure at any time.'

'Ah, but it's not your ability—your great ability—that I think most of; it's your goodness. You are a good man, and a good friend, and a good friend to justice.' He turned himself half round in his chair that he might look at the trophy over the sideboard. I was afraid to look at it.

'Put that on one side,' I said, with becoming gravity. He turned to me again with his nervous excitement growing stronger.

'How can I refuse you?' he cried sharply. 'How can I refuse you anything? Think what you've done for me.' I made a gesture of deprecation. 'Of course,' he went on, hurrying back to his familiar line, 'it can't be much to me—I'm an old man—a little property more or less; but that's nothing. You behaved nobly, with a rare nobility. I can't forget how deeply I am in your debt.'

'Ah,' I said, 'you must put that on one side too.'

'I can't put everything on one side,' he said rather feebly. I made no comment; I made no claim upon his gratitude. I am glad that I showed this generosity; that is still a comfort to me. After a silence which seemed long, there came a reference, which I had half expected and feared. 'I had some idle thoughts for my girl,' he said; 'I ought to tell you that—but a long time hence—a long time hence. There's a friend and neighbour of ours, a fine young fellow, who's pushing his fortune like a man. He's a

good son, and I used to think that he would make a good husband—but years hence, years hence.’

I showed a natural curiosity. ‘And is this young man a suitor?’ I asked anxiously.

‘He has never said a word,’ the old gentleman answered, shaking his head. ‘Perhaps it was no more than my fancy. I fancied that he was waiting till she had grown up; but if she has really grown up, I think he must have said something.’

‘You must put him on one side, too,’ I said, with a frank smile. ‘I can’t admit anybody else’s claim.’

‘No, no; he has no claim. It may have been my fancy. But you’ve been drinking nothing. Shan’t we? shall we——’

As the old gentleman moved uneasily in his chair, I rose promptly from mine. I had made up my mind. In the passage I detained him with my hand on his shoulder. ‘At least do this for me,’ I said sadly but firmly; ‘go into your study for a little while.’ I pushed him gently to the door of his comfortable den. ‘I must speak to her,’ I said; ‘I must learn my fate.’

He was rather dazed, I think. ‘You won’t frighten her,’ he said; ‘she’s a child—a mere child; you won’t frighten her?’

‘Ah,’ I said, in a tone of deep disappointment, ‘you don’t trust me.’

I felt him leap under my hand. ‘Whom should I trust if not you?’ he cried eagerly. ‘You know what I owe you.’

‘Put that on one side,’ I said gravely, as I gently pushed him into his room.

The little drawing-room soothed my senses like a spell. It was all warmth, and its faded furniture was warmed to a subdued beauty of colour. With the firelight flickering on the gown, and the shaded lamplight on her hair, she was bending over the wide book on her lap. I shall never forget the picture. As I came into the room she looked up. I have said that she often reminded me of an angel on a church window, an angel who awaited command. As her eyes came frankly to meet mine, I saw with a new thrill that mine was the command for which she waited. I felt my power over this lovely child. As I drew nearer, I saw her look change to a grave surprise, but she did not turn away her head. I bent down to her, and with some murmured words of tenderness pressed my lips to hers. The colour left her face, but she showed no sign of fear. Only her eyes were filled with a strange wonder and awe. There are scenes too sacred for the pen. When the

hour of good-night had come, and we three stood together at the foot of the stairs, I saw that the tears ran unchecked down the cheeks of the old gentleman; and I confess that my own eyes were not free from moisture.

I awoke the next morning from a sound and refreshing sleep, and with good courage for the task before me. I knew that that wild youth who had thrust his confidences upon me might give me trouble. I had determined to anticipate his first move. In the early dawn I went down the stairs as quietly as I could. All



Nature seemed to smile on me, as if it were already my marriage morning. But I had no time to note, as I love to do, the beauty of the eastern sky. I slipped out of the house and into the stable-yard. I found my host's groom, whom I had already made my friend by common but efficient means, preparing to exercise the small but useful stud; and after the usual compliments on his care of the beasts, I asked him if he were going near the house of the troublesome young man to leave a note there. This note was brief and to the point. In it I told my rival that it seemed to me

the frankest course to inform him at once of my engagement. I added that I had been so much puzzled and confused by his sudden and unlooked-for confidences, that I had not decided to tell him then and there of my intentions until I had seen him drive away and my chance was lost. I then gave expression to the hope (which I most sincerely felt) that, since he had been content to defer all expression of his feelings so long, they were less deeply engaged than he fancied. I finished my letter with the wish that he would always remain her friend and mine.

When I had watched the groom ride slowly away with my missive in his pocket, I breathed more freely. I gave myself up to the enjoyment of the early hour and of love's young dream. My darling was exquisitely lovely and charming on that day. She was very pale and quiet; but her stillness seemed to me the outward sign of the exactly right mood: I would not have wished her a shade more lively. As I walked beside her in the little old-fashioned garden, I turned the current of my talk at last to the young man, my neighbour. The groom had returned before breakfast, but had brought no answer to my note. I was relieved, for I had half feared a hurried and violent reply. I watched my little girl's face narrowly as I smiled carelessly upon it. I saw that at the mention of his name it brightened with open affection, but showed no trace of sentiment. She seemed to wake from her silence. 'I wonder what he will say!' she said aloud, with the frank curiosity of a child.

I was going to say something, when I saw the servant coming round the corner of the house with a letter in his hand. I stepped hastily between the girl and him, and took the note from him. As she strolled on with her eyes dropped to the gravel-path, I stood still and read my rival's answer. I copy it here. It had no beginning and no signature. 'You ought to have told me. If this is true, and she is engaged to you, I shall hold my tongue. For God's sake, be good to her. You don't know what a delicate sweet soul she is, and how noble. Be good to her.' That was all. It was curt, and seemed unfriendly. He almost seemed to doubt my word; and the passionate appeal to me to be good to her seemed almost insulting. He might have been writing to a tyrant, or an ogre, or to the villain of a three-volume novel. Like everything which the unfortunate youth did, it was exaggerated and out of taste. As I put it away carefully in my pocket-book, I made up my mind to leave the place before

night. I felt sure that he would follow his note, that he would not have the good sense to keep away. A meeting would be pleasant to neither; I would not come back until he had said good-bye. Of course he would hasten his departure for America; I would leave the coast clear for his farewell interview. I did not fear anything which he might say behind my back. What had he to say except that I had not imitated his ridiculous loquacity—his silly want of reserve—in a railway-carriage? As for my life at large, I felt a glad confidence that no man could find anything which was not eminently respectable either in my public or my private career. Besides, if he tried to blacken my character in the eyes of my future wife, I was sure that he would only condemn himself. Had I not seen the absolute trust—even veneration—in those eyes? Ah me for the stability of woman! If she had but kept her trust in me unweakened! But—as the novelists say—to my story! I must not linger over my task.

When I had put my rival's letter in my pocket, I made haste to the side of my beloved. Stealing my arm gently round her, I told her that I must leave her on that day. I felt her tremble, but she did not withdraw herself from me. I told her that I had broken away from most important public business, because I could not do my work until I had heard my fate from her lips; that now I must hurry back to my duty; that I should come to her again in the first hour of my freedom. 'And did you care for me like that?' she said, with awe in her voice. I stooped to look into her eyes, and I saw that they were full of veneration. That, I said to my heart, was the true foundation for the airy palace of love. On that what might I not build? Ah me for the prophecies of men, where woman is the theme! Ah me for the crumbling of foundations, which seem strong enough to resist the ages! My girl was strangely silent; and I did not wish it otherwise. She walked beside me with a beautiful docility; she neither vaulted now, nor ran races with her treacherous wolfish animal, who was puzzled by the change. She was no longer busy noting all the tiny objects in earth and air; but she led me on a little round of visits to the creatures and the corners, which had been the objects of her especial affection. She introduced me with perfect gravity to the last litter of pigs and to the spaniel puppies. She led me, stooping, into that nook in the midst of the unkempt shrubbery, where she had played so often at keeping house—she, who was to keep a real house now. She took it for

granted that I was deeply interested in these trifles which she showed me. It crossed my mind once or twice that she showed them to me as if they were to be part of our future life, as if I too were to live there with the little pigs and the rabbits in the hutch. Poor little girl! It was no part of my task on that morning to woo her from her simple visions of the future. She was strangely sweet to me. I never felt more certain of anything than that I had made no mistake in my choice. Her gravity had an intense charm, and her innocence an absolute fragrance. She did not laugh nor leap; she was very quiet; she took my kisses like a child. There are things too sacred for the pen. On that afternoon I left her.

Her first letter which she wrote to me lies before me now. The paper is a little crumpled, the ink perhaps a little faded; and yet it seems but yesterday that I smiled at it so tenderly for the first time. It was a prim little note; but it charmed me: its formality had an old-fashioned fragrance; it was like the lavender which her sunny garden of bees furnished so bountifully to her ancient house. She wrote that all was well; and after the latest news of her father, and of the young puppies, and of the new calf, she told me that the dusky youth had already made his farewell visit. She was so sorry that he had to go at once; she supposed that there was something wrong with the beasts, for he seemed very silent and as if he were thinking of something else; and he was to start on the very next day for Liverpool; she was very sorry. She ended with an apology for childish handwriting; and she signed herself 'very truly' mine. I remember that when I saw the formal conclusion, written in a hand which was certainly unformed, I turned back to the beginning and noted, with a low laugh, that she had begun with 'Dear Mr. —.' How sweet it would be to teach her modest lips to use my Christian name! I was delighted with her news of my would-be rival. To-day, or to-morrow at latest, he would be at sea. I telegraphed to my dear girl's father that I would be with him on the morrow. I told myself that the end of my doubts and hesitations had come. I had had quite enough of this travelling up and down, which unsettled my ideas and interfered with my work. I determined that my wedding should be performed with the least possible delay.

Of that fateful day there is next to nothing which need be said. I was full of confidence, and serenely happy. After a brief time of damp and wintry weather, the sun shone glorious on

my wedding morn. And yet, if I were of a superstitious character, I might have trembled. My father-in-law was in his most nervous state, and between his eagerness to do me honour and his unreasonable grief at losing his child, he made a series of the most ludicrous mistakes. It seemed a mere chance that he was in church to give away the bride. The bride herself was pale as a little ghost, and her great eyes looked out at me as if she were some maiden newly come into a pagan temple, and dumbly imploring with veneration and fear the clemency of her deity. But the omen—the ridiculous omen—which might have frightened a superstitious man, was this. I can laugh at it now, but at the moment it made me furious, and not unnaturally. That beast of a dog, who had prowled round me like a wolf ever since I set foot in the place, was lying at the bottom of the staircase when I came down dressed for the ceremony. I had scarcely stepped over him with some conciliatory words, when he sprang at my back and tore my new coat from top to bottom. I confess that I was frightened, and I had no time to collect myself before I was hurried to church. I was married in an old black coat and a new blue waistcoat; I dropped the ring; I felt that I appeared from first to last to the least possible advantage. Some hours had passed before I was myself again.





## CHAPTER IV.

MANY times since I took this pen in hand have I been tempted to fling it from me, but never so strongly tempted as now. Is it not hard that a man should be compelled to lift the decent veil which hides the sacred drama of his married life? But I will not waste time in complaints. The headstrong character of another has made this task inevitable. I will make it as short as I can.

The rest of the tale which I have to tell is a tale of bitter disappointment—of my quick awakening from a foolish dream. I had made a mistake; I had now to reap the fruits. It is true that in the mere matter of money I had no reason to complain. My father-in-law was so full of gratitude to me and of a blind devotion to his only child, that he seemed ready to give away everything at the slightest hint. But, though I make no pretence of despising wealth, I know well that it is not the one thing needful. It is only valuable as a means; though it might aid me to success, it was not success. Besides, there was not enough of it. Even if we had

acquired all the property of the old gentleman, we should not have been rich among the rich ; our wealth would not have been a power. And though my pale young bride had brought me money, and would certainly inherit more, where was the full sympathy for which I had given myself away ? Where was the loving helpmate ever ready to assist me on my upward course ? Where was the trustful and helpful companion of my career ? I had dreamed of the absolute union of two souls. With the folly of a boy, perhaps, I had dreamed that marriage might be no less than this. I had allowed myself to dream—and sad indeed was the awakening.

I had felt certain that my wife's social success would be of great use to me as a politician. I had counted on it. I am no less certain now that she might have enjoyed it almost without an effort. But not only would she make no effort, she seemed to shrink with an inexplicable repugnance from the obvious path before her. I will not be unjust to her. I cannot say that she ever refused to do anything which I told her. She obeyed me in detail ; but her obedience was spiritless. When I left her without specific commands, she did nothing. I had looked to her to court an amiable and indulgent society with all her heart—alas ! you would have thought that she had no heart at all. I was very busy ; I necessarily left her much alone. I could not be for ever dictating her little social duties ; if I neglected to dictate them, she sat at home and read books. She grew pale and listless. She, who had run like a young huntress in the country, would scarcely walk in London, unless I sent her out. Of course I could not let her walk alone. She took an irrational dislike to the society of her French maid, who had come with the highest character from one of the best houses. She suggested one day that she might walk with her dog, if I would let him come to us in London ; but of course it was impossible for me to have that dangerous animal in the house ; and I reminded her that collies are notoriously unhappy in towns. So she sat at home on most days, till her silence and docility became irritating. In the evenings I took her to all the parties which were likely to be useful. Wherever we went I was complimented on her loveliness, and I perceived a sensation on all sides which was far more complimentary. Her unusual style and extraordinary beauty made her conspicuous in spite of herself. But I soon found out that men thought her dull. She did not seem to understand even the plainest compliments to her looks. She was distressed by the frank stare of admiration, which is a sign

nowadays of the best breeding. I was very patient with her and kind. I trusted to time ; I thought that time would work wonders.

Though I had counted on my wife's popularity with all the desirable world, I counted less on her success with men than with women. I had felt sure that her youth, her innocence, and her helplessness would appeal to the motherly instincts, which are to be found even in the most fashionable as in the most vulgar women. I had looked forward to this lovely married child being taken up by the most influential ladies of the great world ; and among these ladies I had from the first selected one who was to be enchanted beyond all the rest. At that time there was nobody who could be of more use to me than that fair marchioness whose story is now in every mouth. At that time she was a power. She was not young ; but she had an air of insolence which was more effective than youth. She was not clever ; but she made men talk to her, and never forgot to look appreciative. I need no longer hesitate to say that she was not good ; but she had so blunt a method of announcing the frailties of her female friends, that for the most part they were careful to let her character alone. Nobody can be surprised to hear now that she exercised at the time of my marriage an extraordinary influence on a prominent member of the party to which I belong. This prominent member was a friend of her husband also : the world had no right to talk. Since then the poor lady has sunk ; the man, whom she has ruined, has lost his chance of power ; and I can do no harm by this reference to an ill-omened friendship which has been discussed in every gin-palace. All this belongs now to the unsavoury history of notorious scandals. It is enough for me to say that at the time of my marriage there was nothing more likely to do me good than a friendship between this influential marchioness and my wife. That member of the party over whom the lady had such strange power was the one man to whom I then pinned my faith. Of course the influence of women on politics is not what it was. They have a formidable rival in the admirable improvement of local machinery. Nevertheless, they have still more power than the outside world will easily believe. I knew the strength of this one lady ; I knew, too, that she regarded me with a certain suspicion, perhaps a suspicion of my clear sight. I counted with certainty on her capture by the guileless charm of my childlike wife. I was not mistaken. The *grande dame* was delighted with

a style so unlike her own; she showed the most amiable eagerness to adopt the modest new-comer, and to introduce her to the very best people; for my wife's sake she was for the first time decently civil to me. But though this great lady took some pains to be agreeable, my wife would not respond. She called, as I bade her; she went to tea and to luncheon, as I bade her; she accepted a seat in her new friend's victoria, because I begged her never to refuse that offer. But she was as cold as a snow image. She did what I told her, but no more. She said nothing of the marchioness, till one day she broke from her silence and said more than enough. I recall my amazement as I listened. I had no idea that she knew so much of the wickedness of the world, and I told her so. She answered passionately that it was this 'woman' who had shown it to her; that she was a wicked woman, who believed in no goodness, and wished every one to be wicked like her. I was astonished. Though I listened with pain, I remember that even then I was struck by my young wife's loveliness. This glow of feeling gave colour to her cheek and light to her eye. She looked like an angel still, but it was a slim Michael with a fiery sword. I was very patient with her. I made her sit beside me on the sofa, and I talked to her of the world. I pointed out to her that, whatever one's own selfish preferences, one must live in the world, because there was no other at present. I told her that the fashionable talk of the day was worse than the conduct of fashionable people; and that it was uncharitable, if not un-Christian, to think otherwise. It was not for us to condemn this lady, nor to turn our backs on her. Was it fanciful, I asked, to hope that her great liking for one so pure and innocent was the first sign of an inclination towards better thoughts and a higher level of feelings? I talked as well and as kindly as I could; and yet, before I had finished, I saw for the first time in my wife's eyes a look which I shall never forget. It was almost a look of horror. Instead of those eyes which had met mine of yore with the expression of one who waits eager to obey the directing glance—instead of the old alertness and frank trustfulness—here were eyes with something like horror in them. I was dumb for a moment. One might have thought from her look that I had proposed to beat her. Not a word too much has been said of the strangeness of women, nor of the terrible uncertainty of marriage.

If my wife had shown any eagerness to go back to her old home, I would have taken her there at the end of the season,

though it would have been highly inconvenient. But she acquiesced in all my plans with a listless obedience which was even a little dispiriting. We had several invitations, which it was well for me to accept; and our round of visits filled so much time that I was summoned to London before I had found time to look up my father-in-law. I suggested that my wife should go to him, though I could not; and it was when she showed no eagerness for this (though she had been parted from him for little less than a year) that I feared for the first time that she was not well. I took her with me to town. I consulted an eminent physician. During all that winter she had the best advice. Nobody could find anything the matter with her; but they told me that it was important to keep up her health and strength while she was in her present condition. I consulted the best doctors. I spared no expense. I have nothing to reproach myself with; and yet how poor this consolation seems as I recall that troublous time.

Why should I linger now? The spring came (the second spring since my ill-omened marriage) and found my wife white as its whitest snowdrop. She told me that she must go home. I remember the pang with which I heard her speak of home, and knew that she did not mean her husband's house. I made no objection; I was anxious to humour her; I was growing daily more anxious about her health. Of course it was impossible for me to go. The session had but just begun, and my hands were full. I promised to follow her at Easter. I half hoped to the last that she would not leave me to my lonely duties in London, that her heart would fail her when the moment of parting came. But she said very little when it was time to go. She looked at me with great sad eyes when I kissed her and spoke cheerfully of our happy meeting in that dear old house where I had seen her first. I spoke cheerfully for her sake; but I was sad at my solitary dinner. How unlike it was to that ideal marriage of which I had dreamed! Alone on my hearth on that gloomy evening I almost confessed to myself that my marriage was a mistake—that it might even ruin my career.



## CHAPTER V.

EASTER had not yet arrived when I was summoned to my wife. The doctor's message was peremptory; and I obeyed it without hesitation. Of my thoughts and tender feelings on that lonely journey how can I bear to write? As I drove from the station to the house, and saw on all sides traces of the coming of the spring, I could not believe that my sweetest flower lay nipped by winter's frost. Cool shadow lay on the cool grey front of the beautiful old house, for it was yet morning; and I seemed to feel a chill at the ominous silence. I forgot my wife's mistakes and my disappointments; I thought only of her young life and loveliness, and of the crisis which was at hand. On the very threshold another sorrow awaited me. The doctor, who was an old friend of my father-in-law, came to meet me, and told me rather curtly that his patient had begged that I might be kept from her. Of course I promised obedience; I fancied that the poor child did not like me to see her when she was not in looks; I smiled, and though sadly, at my fancy.

For a whole day I stole about the house noiselessly, or wandered in the little garden, or the meadow rich with primroses. I had no companion to share the burden of my grief. The old gentleman would scarcely speak; he seemed confused with anxiety to such an extent that I feared for his reason; he shut himself in his own room when he was not admitted to hers. I even tried to conciliate the dog who had torn my coat on my wedding-day; but the brute would only whine and walk stiffly back with his tail drooping to the front steps, where he lay and waited for his mistress. The silence and the loneliness took hold of my nerves. I felt that I must see somebody. I could not help believing that the sight of me would have a beneficial effect on my wife, though the anticipation of a visit was too great a trial for her nerves. Convinced that my appearance must do good, I softly ascended the stairs on the second morning, and walked into the shaded room. Her white face turned to me as I entered, and I saw in it an expression of horror. Was it not awful to read in the face of her whom I had chosen from all women for myself an expression of horror? I had not known that the doctor was with her, or I should have timed my visit otherwise. I did not recognise his presence till I felt him push me with scant ceremony from the room. Outside the door he told me, without the least disguise, that if my wife saw me again he would not answer for the consequences. 'She has taken an overwhelming dislike of you,' he said—'doubtless unreasonable,' he added after a moment, 'but none the less real.' How sad was this to hear! If I had been anxious before, I was doubly anxious now. This causeless antipathy, this distressing mania, was a very bad sign.

It was on the next day towards evening that they told me that I was a father: and hardly twenty-four hours had passed away when they told me that the baby was dead. I am not ashamed to say that I wept for this little blossom untimely plucked, for this little daughter, who had never seen her father.

A few more hours went from me, and I was called to the bedside of my dying wife. With what tender feelings did I cross once more the threshold. She lay like an angel, with her fair hair spread wide on the pillow. At a glance I knew that there was no hope, for she seemed hardly to recognise me. Her eyes scarcely rested on my face before they turned again to her father, who knelt on the opposite side of the bed. I was hurt and grieved, but I forebore to press my claims to her love and duty. All her weakened thought was centred on the old man, who knelt beside the



bed with his face hidden. She seemed to croon over him like a mother with her baby; and when the faint sound ceased there was the silence of death in the room.

I wish that I could end my sad story here. Slowly the lagging hours passed away from the house of mourning, till the day of the funeral came. Of course I should have shrunk from no observance which could have done honour to the dead; but it was the wish of my father-in-law that everything should be of the simplest. It pleased my fancy, too, that green grass should be there instead of ponderous marble: that the dews and the showers and the simple flowers which she loved should visit her grave in the sweet country churchyard.

The funeral was over. On the next day I was to go back to London, and to such part of my daily labours as could be transacted without undue publicity. The first pangs of sorrow were softened mercifully to a tender melancholy. I was already thinking—ah me how pathetic it is!—that my brief married life would be to me in time no more than an episode half-sad, half-sweet, and almost unreal. I should go back manfully to work; and only in the brief pauses of the strife of parties should I have leisure to muse on that boyish dream of love which might have been my ruin. I had dined alone, for my father-in-law had begged to be excused; it was a lovely balmy evening, full of the sweetness of the youthful year; I strolled out, and wayward fancy led me down the road to the quiet churchyard where I had stood on that day as chief mourner. On the morrow I should take up again the business of my life; but that one evening I might yield to tender thoughts and sentiments. The quiet of the place and of the hour soothed my troubled spirit; and I drew near with gentle thoughts to the sacred spot. Suddenly I felt a shock which was most painful. A black figure—black in the fading night—was flung face downwards on my wife's grave. I suppose I uttered an exclamation, for in an instant he had leapt up; and I saw that it was the savage youth, who ought to have been three thousand miles away. With the instinctive feeling of a gentleman I put out my hand, but he kept his arms by his side. He stood between me and the grave of my own wife, as if he would keep me from it. 'Thank God,' he said, in a hoarse, unpleasant voice, 'that your baby is dead! You won't have another woman's soul to torture.' He turned and knelt on the ground, and stroked the damp grass with his hand as if I were not there. 'Oh, my love!—my love!' I heard him muttering: while I, her husband, stood close beside. I recoiled from him with

horror. What a man was this! And it is this man—this boy whose folly has almost the stamp of madness—who has compelled me to interrupt my important duties with this most melancholy task. I learned that at the first rumour of my poor wife's illness he had abandoned his duties in a moment, and had travelled unasked and unlooked for to find her. It is a merey that he was too late to disturb with his fierce presence those last peaceful hours.

Early on the next morning I paid a last hurried visit to the churchyard; and it was on the very grave of my poor wife that I



picked up the crumpled scrap of paper which has compelled me to write this melancholy tale. Though he had dropped this paper in his frenzy, I knew that he might write others, and I have thus anticipated his possible attack. To the many this may seem a story of some melancholy interest; the few will recognise an episode in a life of some public utility; and I myself shall be ready to point to it at any time as the true account of a sad period of my life, and to appeal from the rash and frenzied attack of my bitter foe, whenever it may come, to this plain record of facts, with its tone of candour and sobriety.

